

WELCOMING THE  
Australia's magazine of the performing arts. December 1979 \$1.95\*

# Theatre Australia

Diedrich to West End  
Jack Hibberd in Verse

Aunty Jack's Christmas message  
NIDA's unhappy Birthday



**CHRISTMAS  
SHOWS**

Warrior & Pardlow: Ugly sisters  
in Cinderella

Time for  
**ANIMROD**



# Theatre Australia

DECEMBER 1979, VOLUME 4 No. 5

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# A PREVIEW OF SOME 1980\* SHOWS!

Presented by  
**THE AUSTRALIAN ELIZABETHAN THEATRE TRUST**



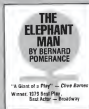
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\* MORE SHOWS TO BE ANNOUNCED.



# I N F O

**S**ON OF BETTY—Reg Livermore's tough one-man show to be called *Son of Betty* is going to be his last. It's subtitled "The Best of them All" (or "A Souvenir of Obsession"), and according to director Peter Rafter, that's partly what it is. "From the audiences' point of view it probably will be the best, because a lot of people haven't seen them all we've picked the eyes out of previous shows, and of course there is new material too."

Characters to be re-enacted are Betty Black Bauer herself, Valerie Amylntratte, Tara the Circus Lady, Leonard and Beryl. But the format will be more stylish than before. Less of the episodic

impersonations, and the technical effects more sophisticated.

Why is it to be Reg's last show? "Well he certainly won't be leaving the stage for good," says Rafter. "It's rather like the end of an era. Reg has gone about as far as he could in that particular approach, he needs to have a decent rest and then we will be working on a new approach for the future. Something with a fresh challenge."

Livermore has given over six hundred performances in Australia of his one-man shows, *Betty Black Bauer*, *Pauline Henderson* and *Saved Cars*. *Son of Betty* opens in Melbourne in March next year, but before plunging into that he's taking a break in New York.



## JACOBI ON HAMLET

Derek Jacobi's playing of Hamlet will rank with the greatest of the English audiences, and indeed critics, are anything to go by. But this is not Jacobi's first time in the role.

"Hamlet can be played at almost any age. I made my first go at the Danish windmill as a less-than-traditionally schooled boy, all rant and rave, piling my Pelian of enthusiasm and good intentions upon my Ose of inexperience and impetuosity. Now in my middle years (with a great deal more trepidation, looking now before and after instead of merely ahead) I have the good fortune to make another attempt at the awash course. Hopefully, there will be other opportunities in the future."

"I find acting difficult to analyse for myself, well nigh impossible to talk

about and those thrilling moments when a part takes an actor into overdrive, he himself may often be only dimly aware of the mechanics. It's called inspiration and comes all too rarely. In any case, no self-respecting comedian tells his audience how the tricks are done. If I could show Hamlet's reality, his contemporary accessibility, transmit an unstable malaise with the blood of the courser, soldier, scholar burning through his veins and the unflinching questions gnawing at his heart, then I would like to think that I was, at least, on the right path and in the right mood."

"More importantly, I would not do this alone. The play may be called *Hamlet*, indeed that it is not never has been, and, I hope, never will be a one-man show."

David, the father, Hamlet with Robert Fichman as Polonius



**A**T CHANGE AT NIMROD Nimrod Theatre has not only lost an artistic director this year but gained two new ones: but is shortly to lose its General Manager. From January 1990 Paul Iley will be leaving Nimrod to take up the same post at the State Theatre Company of South Australia. He will be replacing Wayne Madden at the STC.

In the three years Iley has been at Nimrod (and in Australia) he has built a reputation as probably the top theatre administrator in the country, and pushed Nimrod to the forefront of

subsidised theatre. Through his actions the company has toured extensively, not only throughout Australia, which hardly any other companies can afford to do, but also to New Zealand, England and the States.

The question is how much does Nimrod's present pre-eminence rest on the capabilities of Mr Iley. That will in doubt be seen in the next few months. It is rumoured that one of the reasons for his departure is internal problems and personality clashes at Nimrod.

Paul Iley



**V**ULNERABLE FUTURE Taking advantage of the consequent presence in Perth of Colin George, Director of the Adelaide STC, and Bob Adams, Director of the Theatre Board of the Australia Council, Derek Holroyd, (Dean of Art and Design at the WA Institute of Technology) organised a seminar to discuss the direction theatre might take in Australia in the 1990's. The speakers were joined on a panel by playwright Mary Gage, actor-director Edgar

Metcalf, WA Arts Council Director Tim Mason, Rory Nichols and Colin O'Brien. Most of the people who came to the seminar were students from the two universities and from WAIT and professional theatre people.

Just returned from England, Colin George brought news of Mrs Thatcher's decision to withdraw subsidy from twelve theatres (including the Royal Court and the Open Space) and to reduce substantially the grant to even such prestigious

**T**HE AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING GROUP have picked their new ensemble of actors for 1990, which is being made the nucleus of Pinn Factory work. Out of 150 applications, ten were chosen - five men and five women - after exhaustive interviews and days of workshoping.

The group will have a budget of \$100,000 when they start work at the end of January, though quite what they will do with it or what kind of work they will produce isn't yet known.

The new group are: Robin Board, Richard Healy, Peter King, Margot Knight, Laurel McEwan who has been working in Sydney television, Judy McHenry (the only one to have worked previously with the APG), Dennis Moore, Danny Nash an ex-stock and roll singer, Curtis Wenz and Jo White.

Bill Garner, who was part of the selection committee, is very optimistic about the outcome of the new structure. "We're confident that we have a very strong group of people - there's not one weak link in the chain. They have to thrust out the kind of work they

will be doing and there will probably be conflicting opinions. No single line is emerging yet, but it will be interesting. No one in the new ensemble is from the old Collective, they will have to earn Collective membership and their funds will come through us. The old guard will still be part of the Collective, but they will have to generate their own income though there will be a little money for other projects. Only the ensemble will be drawing weekly wages."

Bill Garner



companies as the RSC. This information naturally focused the discussion on the question of subsidy. Theaters which is critical (in the broadest sense) such as a group called Desperate Measures was seen to be the most vulnerable a fact pointed by their being recently mentioned in Parliament and grant to them queried. There followed some ideological debate as to the degree to which theatres should woo or confirm their audiences.

The Arts Council Directors both seemed to

feel that in the nightmarish subsidy would be directed less to enlarging or propping up large companies, or seeking for overseas prestige (as has tended to be the case in opera and ballet) and more to establishment grants over a limited period and for specific one-off schemes. The idea for the future seemed to be for the encouragement of local theatres and increase in standards by the injection of professional help rather than increased support for larger capital city companies.

# I N F O



## BOMBS ON TOUR

How ironic that one of the most successful shows of this year in Sydney should have had to close for lack of a theatre. Graham Bond's schoolboy rock musical *Boy's Own* *Wet* played an eleven week season at the run-downed Kirk Gallen until September 21, when the Gallery was suddenly closed because of fire regulations. BOMB had been an absolute sell-out and was due to run till Christmas, the company, Benham Woods Holdings, simply couldn't find another venue in Sydney.

The upshot is that they are currently in the middle of a national tour, in Newcastle they ran for a week last month, they're playing in Melbourne at St Martins Theatre until January 3, and after that it's the Space in Adelaide from January 10 to

February 5. On the way back to Sydney they plan a country tour as they travel.

Just as the company couldn't find a hacker in the first place, or then a theatre, they've had the same response to the idea of an album of the show. Nothing daunted they've got a recording together themselves and put down mixed and cut the disc and designed the cover, in the space of two weeks, so that its release would co-incide with the Newcastle launch.

When the show's been round the country there's also the possibility of a film of *Boy's Own*. If no one can be found to back this venture then once again the company will look to doing it themselves.

Their latest publicity idea is a package deal for the show of four school caps, an album and four school caps.

## SHOPFRONT CANASIAN

Theatre for young people based in Carlton NSW, have a programme called the Shopfront Canasian. It is a unique travelling theatre community of fourteen young people who will visit country towns to perform and help other young people to build their own plays, dances, music, mime, shows, puppets and other performances through workshops.

Errol Bay, director of Shopfront says the idea is for young people in country towns to build performances out of their own experiences about their lives and town. "The Canasian will end their one or two week visit with a Community Day where plays and events

created in the workshops will be performed for the whole town amidst clowns, jugglers and wandering minstrels. These plays will also be invited to perform at the Shopfront Theatre as a further aspect of the city-country exchange of creative and communal ideas."

Some of the performers the Canasian will be going to the towns will include *Chickadee* for high schools, *The Tak Plan* for primary and an adaptation of *The Tempest* all of which Shopfront have used in their own area with great success. They are accepting bookings from country towns now for the 1980 Shopfront Canasian.

Shopfront Canasian 1979



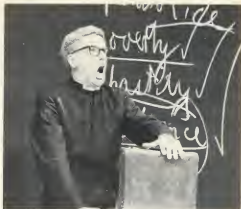


**B**ROTHERS IN SCULPTURE, Simon Ward's production of Ron Blair's one-man play *The Common Brothers*, has recently returned from a season at the Riverside Studios in London. Having played to tremendous receptions all over Australia and in New Zealand, Peter Carroll went on to collect rave notices in London too.

Michael Hollington of *The Guardian* called it "a small gem" and compared it favourably with *Someones Frontline*, saying "unlike that it never dwindles into sentimentality and does not smother its welcome in a second."

Michael Cosewell of the *Financial Times*, also thought it "a gem" and had much praise for the actors.

"A superb complete physical portrait of the Brother whose need for insurance in his own faith is as poignant as his recurring complaint. "and the play "It is a delicate funny little play that comes with clinical but affectionate precision the mannerisms of classroom ritual and has much to say about the nature of



secular and religious vocation."

Others said "a remarkable tour de force rare performance", "beautifully shaded portrait", "bravura performance", "a great

play", "masterpiece" and all those other one-liners that lead, so glad on billboards and press releases!

Kate Grenville of the *London Australia Magazine* felt that "far from having to

make an apology to British theatre, this performance could teach the Brits a thing or two about sheer dramatic interest and sympathy.

*Peter Carroll in the Brothers*

**M**IKE MULLINS started a good deal of interest last year with his Theatre in Sculpture at the Pilgrim Theatre, but what has happened to him since? His slogan then was "we're moving towards the eighties," his

"Theatre in Sculpture is no more, it died with an unsuccessful limited life application. Having received a special project to mount *New Blood* I shall form a new group of people under the title 'Space/Jump Performance'. *New Blood* will explore the new Australia that is, the Australian of tomorrow."

Mullins will be using performers Anne Byrom, Peter Flynn, Bob Thomey, and Maureen McLaugh, with designer Sylvia James. Michael Carroll will be composing music and Marvyn Kraker acting as literary advisor.

It seems to be a still looking for an abnormal performer and can be contacted at Exiles bookshop in Darlinghurst during December Performances of *New Blood* are planned to begin on March 20 at a 'yet to be found warehouse somewhere in the inner city."

*Theatre in Sculpture in 1988*



# LETTERS

## DANCE TO CORRECTIONS

Dear Sir,

May I take the opportunity to make some comments and corrections in regard to certain factual aspects of recent notices concerning the Sydney Dance Company.

In the September issue of *Flare* Australia there appeared an essay which sought to make comparisons between Graeme Murphy's *Joppy*, the first full-length dance work created by Australians and Jennifer Tinkler's *Whiskers*, a full-length work created for Australian Dance Theatre.

The writer referred to *Whiskers* as the second such "full-length" work created in Australia when, in fact, Graeme Murphy's *Assessors* for the Sydney Dance Company successfully created and presented before *Whiskers* *Assessors* is the second full-length work produced by the Sydney Dance Company, a director whom a twelve month period that I led some months should certainly be made of Gough Welch's ballet *Red* which is a full-length production of the West Australian Ballet. I am not quite sure of the order of things when one considers *Red* in this time and I feel that it is probably not so relevant to discuss who came first with whom but amongst those other two full-length works being mentioned.

In the October issue of *Flare* Australia in William Shakespeare's review of the Sydney Dance Company's "Signature Season" he refers to a duo in *Signatures* choreographed for two women and credits the dancing to Victoria Tinkler and Jennifer Barry. This duo was danced at every performance by Kathy Chard and Jennifer Barry. In Graeme Murphy's *Shakespeare* he makes mention of a dancer who replaced Sherree da Costa for several performances due to Wu da Costa's illness. The playing piece should be for Susan Burling and not Francesca Philpott who actually replaced Sherree da Costa in Andrew Toppe's *Parade* which featured in a later programme.

I would be very grateful if *Flare* Australia could see the revised paragraph for the benefit of dance fans and also for the dancers themselves who enjoy to see their efforts mentioned in a serious but friendly paper to see it done accurately.

Sincerely regards

Janine Kelle,  
Publicity Officer,  
Sydney Dance Company.

## AYPAA'S INROADS

Dear Sir

I am writing this letter to all those who were involved in assisting with the development of the KIDDS-TRAIN Project, mainly to express one of the eternal truths of the universe taken by National AYPAA to disseminate a project as a contribution celebration of the International Year of the Child 1979 in Australia from the field of youth performing arts.

The concept of the KIDDS-TRAIN has now become a reality.

In spite of widespread interest and enthusiasm and in spite of a considerable amount of written support there was simply not the fund such available to enable the project to develop much beyond the feasibility stage. The endorsement of various well-meaning and enthusiastic government and non-government commissions and organisations meant very little when a state in the middle of obtaining actual funds.

One of the indirect benefits gained by National AYPAA from its involvement in this project has been the broadening of its experience in dealing with such bodies as the above National AYPAA will not correct its different resources in the future in the same way as it did for the KIDDS-TRAIN, without a substantial positive indication (including a financial commitment) of support for a particular project.

However, if there was no KIDDS-TRAIN in Australia for IYC AYPAA has still managed to make considerable INROADS.

As a direct result of the KIDDS-TRAIN programme undertaken by National AYPAA, the INROADS Project is now occurring. In related parts of every state and territory a project is taking place, which in the words of Senator Margaret Guilfoyle the Federal Minister responsible for IYC in Australia, and whose Office of Child Care provided the initial financial stimulus for the project, will "involve many children in country areas in cultural, creative play experiences to which they would not normally have access."

AYPAA is very excited about this project - a comprehensive series of state-based ventures which will bring undoubted delight and pleasure to many children, parents, teachers, community leaders and others in remote and isolated areas of

Australia. In each capital city, a small band of arts practitioners have gathered and subsequently travelled to these remote areas (by road, coast, train and plane). Funded to a total of almost \$100,000 (equal by government bodies, art, education, welfare, IYC committees, etc.) at state and federal level, as well as others such as the School of the Air, Colleges of Advanced Education, Arts Councils, etc., INROADS involves 14 visiting art groups, plus various freelance artists (a total of about 150 people involved for periods ranging from a week to a month), and is a major project for AYPAA, for the IYC, for children, and for Australia.

Apart from this major and obvious result of the time and energy spent by AYPAA will to develop the rural KIDDS-TRAIN concept, there have been other benefits as well. More indirect but nevertheless important, they include the establishment of many, many valuable contacts in areas not generally explored by those involved in youth performing arts.

AYPAA will maintain these contacts and anticipate that many future activities will be able to occur as a direct result of having established links through the KIDDS-TRAIN Project. Already in NSW discussions have occurred for a major project in the area of early childhood development to occur in early 1980 to be sponsored by the Family and Children Services Agency, and to involve at least one person with experience in the field of youth performing arts.

The KIDDS-TRAIN has proved that one of the roles of AYPAA is to generate ideas, based on the observed problems and needs of those working in the field. Some of these ideas may not come to fruition, generally for valid and important reasons, but it is the obligation of AYPAA to compile such ideas and to act as a forum for feedback and responses so that the projects which do come to fruition are those determined by the widest range of people possible with the best available advice and research. INROADS is the result of this process.

On behalf of AYPAA I would like to thank you for your interest in this project and in the activities of AYPAA. We trust that this interest will continue and we look forward to sharing the ideas and activities of all those who work in youth performing arts in Australia, with you in the future Years Ahead.

Gladys Brown, AYPAA



BOYZ OWN Macbeth reintroducing the  
M'BETH the AU NEW.

PARIS THEtre

Sydney

28<sup>th</sup> NOV - 5<sup>th</sup> JAN

Really rotten to the  
the 'space' <sup>festive</sup> <sup>centre</sup>

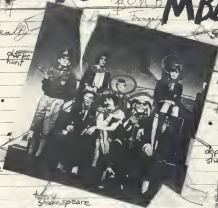
Adelaide 10<sup>th</sup> JAN - FEB

by Tony Shakespeare  
aged 42

and BUY THE bloody  
RECORD →

the original <sup>recognising</sup> <sup>East of</sup> .....

# BOYZ OWN MACBETH



music: **GRAHAME BOND**  
lyrics: **GRAHAME BOND and JIM BURNETT**  
arrangement: **POLLY O'DONOGHUE**

# SPOTLIGHT

## John Diedrich

By Raymond Stanley

Arrived the time this is published somewhere in England Australian actor John Diedrich will be playing *Curly* in a revival of *MilkandHoney* that will probably end up in the West End. It is something most actors would give a right eye to do but—as has happened nearly always throughout his career—it has meant a change of plans for Diedrich, whom I interviewed a few days before he left this country.

He began as a child actor. Picked to play the title role in *Oliver* in 1961, the Welfare Department refused permission as he was only eight, but he did play a page in *Curious* at ten and in the 1966 revival of *Oliver* was the Artful Dodger.

He appeared in school productions and was in a few episodes of *The Incredible Ten* TV series.

At seventeen, Diedrich staged a pirated version of *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* (having taped the professional production) calling it *The Quest* and playing Don Quixote himself.

A Commonwealth Scholarship took him to Melbourne University to study medicine, because his father wanted him to be a doctor. He hated this and frustrated him to play leading characters in America. Unsuccessful in obtaining rights to *Cabaret*, he got them for *Mame's Boys*, a musical about the Marx Brothers.

"For the last six months of my year at university, all I did was concentrate on getting *Mame's Boys* on, and failed miserably and didn't go back."

To support himself, Diedrich took a job cleaning out toilets, working from 7 A.M. until 4 p.m., and then going straight to rehearsals of *Mame's Boys*, in which he played Cousin.

The main reason he put on the



John Diedrich in *MilkandHoney* and *Artful Dodger*.

musical was to interest Kenneth Brindley in buying it. The latter went down one Sunday night when they were rehearsing and talked to Diedrich.

"I think I learned more in fifteen minutes talking to him than I could have learned at MIDA. I was going there to do the directing course but *Mame's Boys* dates got juggled up and I just couldn't do both."

Brindley saw the show and said "Yes, I liked very much, but it's too expensive."

Diedrich auditioned for *Curly* in

was asked to understudy—but declined. Then he was asked to present lead in a production of *Saved Dan* at the St. Martin's.

"I was 19 when I did *Saved Dan* and was pretty rough around the edges, but the thing I had then, that I still have now, is I want to use it. It was just unbridled raw energy." He had excellent reviews for *Saved Dan* and was cast immediately afterwards for Ham. At Miller's production of *Grease* and again got good notices. "I

Continued on page 37

thought "This is just fine, it's going to be very, satisfying, from here on!"

I then he tried to stage the American musical *The Life Annapolis*.

"That little bit cost me six grand, and I lost the lot. I got the biggest kick in the pants I've ever had, and that's when I really started to come to grips with this business as a profession, and taking it very much step by step."

From time to time he appeared in episodes of the Crawford TV series when the musical version of *How Green Was My Valley* was staged. Diedrich was cast in the small but very telling part of Eglamore, and

came together in scenes to always be the way with my career. But then went into the city and Alice started. It was something I'd dreamed of all my life to have a share of mine going into the city, so I couldn't give that away, and couldn't give up my chance at playing in a TV series so they both suffered."

It was while writing for *David* that Diedrich appeared in his first picture *The Devil's Playground* (his only other film has been *Dance* in which he played Karen Prender's husband).

"About six months after *David* finished we started talking about *The*

time we started writing it, about two years too long. We would never have done it, only we were hoping to go to London."

It did plan, however. Hong Kong, from where Diedrich went to London for a holiday. Farley it had been made into a TV special, directed by Tad Jones, a friend of whose London agent Barry Bennett met Diedrich on a visit to Australia.

"Right I thought *The 20s* was going on London I went to Barry and asked if he would represent me. He said he'd be delighted to be down with me, work on videotape, and when we were over there I rang him and he took us out to lunch and said 'Are you still interested in working here?' I replied 'Oh yes, now that I've been here I am.' 'When do you leave?' 'Tomorrow.' 'Can you wait until Monday and audition for *CK's House*?' 'You've got nothing to lose.' 'No I did, and not only did I have nothing to lose, I got this part.' And then I got my work permit."

Diedrich is as much amazed as anyone that he received his work permit from English Equities, especially as he has no English answers. However it seems no one else was anywhere near to his level in the auditions and had permission not been given for him to work in England, the second night have been cancelled.

Is Diedrich likely to be another talent so shall we permanently?

"At the moment all I'm looking at is going over there and doing *CK's House* for as long as it goes, and if there's anything in the offing I'll be coming back home, because I'm very pro-Australian and don't for a second believe that we are alone way behind what's going on over there."

That was it, he's going!

Because it is the opportunity to be seen by important people and I think that in Australia I've reached the crowds. I think it is mainly because the opportunity will never arise again. If I really had the chance I would go to the MTC because that would be better for me, but that would be the hope that I would get to London one day. You can't turn down something like this it's simple as that. But I want to come back because I think it's important to be even more evening here within the next couple of years. It's going to get even better and I think it's pretty good over now."



from this he went into his first straight play, *David George Room On Farley*, which starred Ralph Richardson, from whom he admits he learned an enormous amount. But when the play reached Sydney he contracted glandular fever and had to leave the cast.

Then followed a mixture of minor stage and television roles, around this time Diedrich began to feel he was getting nowhere.

"And that's when John D. Mox and I decided to write *David* in 1975, which we did and had a success with."

While *David* was at the Australian South Yarra he was cast for a lead in the TV series *Bliss*.

"I then unfortunately lost it of them

*20s* and *48* *The Jack*, and the thing I was caught I rehearsed it while on holiday from *Bliss*, so I couldn't both jobs. As we only played it Fridays and Saturdays at midnight, there was no problem with doing *Bliss*. Then as soon as *Bliss* finished we started rehearsing the show, to go into Her Majesty's."

To be in the show still when it played Her Majesty's Diedrich had to relinquish a role he had been cast for in the first production of David Williamson's *The Club*, staged by the MTC.

*The 20s* and *48* *The Jack* played in all capital cities and also went on a country tour.

"The *20s* actually took up about two and a half years of my life from the

# Edgar Metcalfe: HOLE's New Director

By Donna Sadleir

In England, aged 50, Edgar Metcalfe had earned "a reasonable reputation in the repertory circuit" and decided he would like to travel. He accepted the post of artistic director at the Perth Playhouse and was rather disappointed not to find jungle growing round the airport when he arrived in 1967.

Over the years he has become a seasoned commedia with two separate terms as director at the Playhouse, another as an associate director with the Melbourne Theatre Company, and various guest productions in Sydney, Adelaide and Perth interspersed with spells of work back in the UK.

In 1974 he decided that jungle or no jungle, he was going to make his home in Perth and in 1975 became an Australian citizen. In 1976 he was given the WA Citizen of the Year award and in 1978 he was made a Member of the General Division of the Order of Australia for his services to theatre.

During his initial four and a half years at the Playhouse helm, Metcalfe gave Perth theatregoers the kind of theatre they wanted and which he knew so well — a good varied repertoire of ongoing, establishing professional reputation for quality productions as good as any being done in Australia, as well as a considerable local following. During his second contract (1970 and 71) a few Australian plays (by grace of government subsidies) were worked into the repertoire but it was still a risky proposition to offer consumers a Perthese too much of the vernacular.

Metcalfe is now achieving the prospect of taking up the post of artistic director at Perth's Hole in the Wall next year (an appointment announced last month) not least of all because it means he will be able to go on to critics of his programming that he can do Australian plays. Accordingly, he says his first concern

there will be heavily slanted towards new Australian work.

In fact in a sense it could be said that as a theatre man in this country he has come of age with Australian drama. He saw the "wonderful" London production of *One, Two, Three* years ago and agrees that many in the English audience were rather perplexed by it. By contrast he has just read Williamson's latest *Traveling North*.

"Apart from the geographical references," he said "it's really international."



Edgar Metcalfe

Another myth he wants to dispel is the reputation he has acquired in recent years (misleading, or being exclusively a director of popular commercial shows. Those familiar with his Playhouse days recall fine-scale productions of *Hamlet*, *Wings* and *Shakespeare*, but of late it has been a series of such shows as *Doctor In Love*, *Are You Please Here*, *Burnt and As Pained* of *Love* which have kept him in the public eye.

"People don't realise that own play requires expertise. When I'm offered a commercial production I know it's because they believe no one else can do it as well. It's a compliment. But the same rules apply to any play. Without old-fashioned things like basic techniques of audition, of people not standing in front of each other and so on, no play will get across to the audience as it should."

A traditionalist in taste and training (not for him the novel-giving methodists, the disciples of Grotowski or the improvisational patch) he believes in a director, theatre. But as both an actor and a director himself he has a quick and sympathetic identification with those on the other side of the footlights.

On his latest visit to England this year he was especially impressed with the individual performances he saw in London theatres. "I felt it was strong outstanding performances that I'd not really been aware of before. Wonderful London in *Asides*, two brilliant performances in *Close of Play* at the National, Dorothy Tutin. I think it impressed me more because we don't see that so much here. It's nobody's fault. People don't have the continuity of work, they've got the courage to say 'this is my part, I'm going to play it to the hilt.' The Australian actor is still a little inhibited about that."

Similarly, in England there are so many critics that someone a search going to like you, but in Australia (especially Perth) you go all out with a performance and the one or two critics both don't like it then you're damned. It's understandable that actors play safe."

Metcalfe's own particular trademark is an enormous understanding professionalism, whether in his performances in *Swallow Me The Heart* or *Pinner*, or a selection of cabaret/panto dances, or in countless productions he has directed.

He has recently been appearing as the obsequious Speaker in Stephen Barr's excellent production of *Are You Please Here* at the Playhouse and with James Heath, giving the kind of performances for which one is extraordinarily grateful. He is enjoying it not possibly because it allows him a taste of the intellectualising that is denied him elsewhere. That apart, it's not all a bad thing. He concedes, for the hour to have to stand up on stage for a change and put his money where his mouth is.

# W.E.S.T. A Community Theatre Model

By Suzanne Spunier

At the recent Dixon Hamer ballyhoo affair—the International Community Education Conference held in the salty splendour of The Southern Cross Hotel, WEST Community Theatre were one of the participating arts groups. Of the theatre groups who participated they were the only group who took the heart of the Conference seriously.

In addition to performances of their most recent production—a rock musical for schoolkids in the Western region called *Riff Ruff*, they held a workshop session on Community Theatre which was attended by delegates to the conference. At the workshop they presented an account of how they devised *Riff Ruff* with some thirty year ten students at Buckley Park High School, they then went on to put forward a model for generating scripts and performances with groups within the community using their work on *Riff Ruff* as a case study. WEST's aim was to create a relevant, entertaining rock musical for fifteen year olds in Essendon. The production was to be of, by, from and about those kids, the only decision that the group had taken prior to meeting with the kids was that it was to incorporate rock music.

In the second part of the workshop Jan McDonald and Phil Sumner generated from the *Riff Ruff* scripting research process and put forward a model for script generation that could be applied to any group in the community. They came up with a seven point plan:

1. Contact the group the script is to be about and approach them with an idea making no secrets about the project. In the case of *Riff Ruff* the entire year ten at Buckley Park High School were briefed and all the mucky kids who participated in these three sessions, thirty elected themselves to work on it in detail.

2. Wipe your own slate clean, leave behind your own preconceptions about the group. Even though many stereotypes turn out to be true it is important to discover them afresh and for the people involved to come to them unaided. The development of the group's own awareness at this stage is even more important than any theatre problem that may result, otherwise you run the risk of exploiting the group. At this stage it was important that WEST stated its own values as adults and outsiders.

3. Gather ideas and impressions and jot down lines and situations that come up, and observe the patterns of interaction. Regard your scripting task at this stage as one of sleeping yourselves in the atmosphere. Your job is to expose and tease out the issues, from these the eventual themes of the show will come. After each workshop with the group review in detail what has happened outside amongst yourselves.

4. You are now in a position to make decisions about the theme, the frame work or skeleton on which to hang the events, and the style. Jan McDonald

stressed that it was important to make these decisions in that order. The content or theme had to be the most important thing and then the framework and style will organise themselves as a result. She stressed that you shouldn't make arbitrary decisions too early on, and that you must resist the panic feeling about what, if anything will eventually emerge.

In the case of *Riff Ruff* the theme was what it is to be fifteen and living in Essendon. The framework became a rock dance that each of the characters were going to and the problems they encountered getting there. The style was to be impersonating with a documentary feel but would use allegory as well—the dance wouldn't be a real dance but a game led by a games master who in some way controlled the kids' lives. As the concentration span of the kids is relatively short, a decision was made to work on units and to move quickly between them making a series of short virtually self-contained segments.

5. Translate all these decisions onto large sheets of butcher's paper, work on the floor and on the walls, set off



*Riff Ruff* by WEST



desks and the typewriter. Use these pieces of paper like pieces of a jigsaw, rearrange them, get a visual, tactile sense of the structure. Make them into flow charts and put them on the walls, stick up photos, drawings, plans, objects etc — don't be afraid to move them about — but always keep everything in front of you.

In the case of *Ref! Ref!* these charts were divided into three main headings — parents, peers, and relationships. Then more material was classified and added to each section. Fragments of interviews, phrases the kids had said, segments were taken from the video and written out and stuck on the wall together with things that the kids had written themselves. Everything you have collected must be put up — it can easily be rejected later. At this stage Jan and Phil were able to keep going back to the kids and ask them to write out scenes along the lines suggested by the charts.

6. Then one writer takes a section at a time and moulds it into a script. As each section is worked upon individually it is brought back to the group as a whole and the writing and idea clarified and refined. In the case

of *Ref! Ref!* Jan and Phil were the joint writers and for the main part of the scripting process they worked apart from Jan and Linda who interacted in the final show.

7. Immediately type up what you have written, it then becomes a script. Stick these pages up — for every feedback page you've got two and a half minutes of your show. By putting up all the typewritten pages you will know at a glance how much of your play is there and what you haven't covered. By the end of this process you will have a first draft, but you will very likely be faced with one major problem — the ending. It is at this point that the writers must draw some conclusions which are their own as a result of their reflection on the group they have been working with, and these conclusions are not always things that the group can or will come up with themselves.

You now have a script which is pretty well there and you can begin working on it with the actors, once rehearsal begin the physical actors and stage directions to flesh it out will follow and have to be added. After outlining the procedure Phil, Linda

and Jan discussed the consequences of *Ref! Ref!* and working in this way with a particular group in the community.

For these kids *Ref! Ref!* broke a cycle of expectations — they did things their teachers never thought they could do, they took on responsibility for the material in the show and in so doing took on responsibility for their own lives. WEST helped them break a cycle of low expectations, but Jan stressed that WEST's moral responsibility to these kids is a serious one there has to be the possibility for them to do more — WEST must help them start up a Youth Theatre in the region, if WEST doesn't follow up in this way, then they should never have released those expectations in the first place.

Finally WEST said that the community theatre model for group generated scripts was an important and viable way of coming up with Australian material and even more importantly it would be material that the audience it is intended for, can relate to. Moreover such scripts can be adapted to other media — film, video and so open up material to a much wider audience.

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# S H O W S

## On Our Selection By George Whaley

Folklore is the collective traditional beliefs of a nation or group. Ours takes its subject matter mainly from a rural mythology, which has been solidified and most impressively developed and propagated by a long line of verse and prose storytellers. Even a moderately stirring rendition of *The Man From Snowy River* will probably have your average computer programmer shaking with emotion, and urban Australians have traditionally treasured stories of rural primitivism with a dedication which is matched only by their reluctance to live in these country places where the myths were born.

Around the turn of the century Arthur Henry Davis, who wrote as "Skeels Rudd", created a family, based upon his own, which took up a selection on the Darling Downs in south-eastern Queensland. The Rudd family entered the folklore. The stories were published in *The Bulletin* and in four "Selection" books. They are remarkable works. Rudd's literary style was selective in the extreme. He painted vivid pictures with a verbal economy and wit which sold vast numbers of the books in the first two decades of this century.

The books are still in print and we have revived the play.

In May, 1912, an Australian newspaper reported: "There is a play running at the King's Theatre, Melbourne, to crowded audiences, which possesses the novelty of being truly native to the soil. (It) possesses that magic touch of human nature



*Over Country — On Our Selection*

which never appeals in vain to the public. Many Australian plays preceded it, but none have proved such a wonderful draw as this simple exposition of the experiences of men who leave the cities and venture into the neighbourhood of the 'never-never land; and the moral is strong and healthy.' 'I cannot improve upon that columnist's turn of phrase — the appeal of the play, and the books is perfectly explained.

Early this year when we were planning the 1979 Jane Street season a script entitled *On Our Selection* by Skeels Rudd, arrived from Carmichael Press. John Clark was enthusiastic because he saw its popular appeal, and I had fond memories of the books. Then I read the script. It was a word

mix of primitive large transparent melodrama and witless "stage houses". But there was also the occasional excellent scene, and some of the characters survived the translocation from novel to play, and emerged unscathed and true to the originals. The strength of characterization, the reality of the events described, and the remarkable conjunction of high farce and tragedy are the most impressive qualities of the Selection books. Enough of those qualities remained in the play to promise something good, and to send me back to a country childhood and the books.

It was obvious that, if we were to produce the most successful of all Australian plays, which ran somewhere in Australia and New Zealand from 1912 to 1929, and in London in 1920 and which gave rise to four films directed by Ken G. Hall and starring Bert Bailey, some solid reworking would be necessary. Theatrical expectations and styles change in half a century. Now there is a common failing among theatre directors, which is the lurking belief that they may be able to write at least as well as those playwrights whose work they have been succoring for years. One of the reasons for this error of judgement is that directors spend a lot of (lapsed) time assessing new scripts and offering unwelcome opinions to the writers. This often induces, in the director, a false sense of dramaturgical adequacy. I succumbed to that, and rewrote the play without the services of a real writer. But then I did have the books as well as the rough old script, and I have a background, and a father and his promises, among which the vivid bush story still counts for something. I used that experience, and had remarkable pleasure as the audience related to it. Skeels Rudd would approve, I think.

We opened at Jane Street on June

30. We rediscovered "family entertainment" on the same night. The audience age range during the season was remarkable. Small children and adults responded in a way to gladden the heart of the hardest entrepreneur. But our sort of subsidised Australian theatre is not really conditioned to the notion of success, possibly because it is a rare commodity. *On Our Selection* is Australian folklore, the characters would be "Australian comedians" if there was such a thing, and it is a success. The Nimrod management recognised that and we play there from November to January. The Trust was disinterested: the Arts Council said it would not succeed in the country because it was too like country folk and would offend (which inside I find offensive and embarrassingly suburban) and the Adelaide Festival people loved it but could not afford to take twelve actors to Adelaide.

It turned out that the "Cromey" script was one written from memory

in the Melbourne actor and director J. Beresford Fowler. We then found Bert Bailey's daughter, Mrs. Doreen McLean who had her father's original production script. Eric Davis, Nicole Rudd's son, is one that no theatre attempted a play called *On Our Selection* in 1911 and sent it to J.C. Williamson, who showed no interest. Bert Bailey then bought it, adapted it extensively and made it his own. Mrs. McLean asserts that Bailey started with the books and not a Nicole Rudd script. We do not know who first had the idea of a stage version, but Bert Bailey certainly made a significant stage and film career out of the role of Dad.

I had a letter from America the other day from Arthur Bartram who saw a film of the Jane Street production in *American Jokers*. Arthur played Joe in the original production in Sydney in May 1912. That was seven years before the Russian revolution. The play may last as long again.

When casting a play there is only one principle: "When in doubt get a good actor." If you cast well with intelligent, vivid and flexible actors who enjoy doing it, then at least half of the director's work is done. We have such a cast. The rest was easy. The actors made an immediate imaginative connection with the characters. It would have been easy to caricature to confuse rustic innocence with congenial idiosyncrasy, to demean the characters and to turn folklore into parody. It would also have been easy to go for the nostalgia. Either mistake would demolish the play. The actors are too good for that. They recognised qualities which are rarely encountered in the well-mooted and sporadic Australian version of their profession.

We all hope, and I must include Rudd and Bailey and Bartram in that, that we manage the transfer to Nimrod and that many thousands more Australians rediscover something about their roots. I think theatre should also be about that.



Boris Walker, Joe Boffe, Vivienne Gottlieb and John Saxton in "On Our Selection"

# CHRISTMAS

## S H O W S

### *Cinderella — And Everyone Is Going To Have A Ball!* By Pamela Ruskin

The Melbourne Theatre Company is really letting down its collective hair, stepping off its customary path and giving us a real full-scale pantomime of the kind we haven't seen here for a long, long time. On December 19th the curtain will go up on the Athenaeum Theatre on *Cinderella* which has been written by English director Frank Hauser with music by Frank Hauser and of course, directed by Frank Hauser.

The MTC's brochure calls it a "pantomime for adults" which is a bit because according to Frank, and he

here it is for all the family. In fact the MTC hopes to put in some extra matinees for the children.

Frank Hauser, one of England's most versatile and gifted stage directors first came to Australia in 1978 to produce *The Beggar's Opera* and *Thru the MTC*. On this visit he had already given us *The Ahlstroms* and in February will direct *Hobson's Choice* for the company. He has a special affection for pantomimes. *Cinderella* is the third one, following on *Aladdin* and *The Sleeping Beauty*. "I've just finished the book and music for a fourth one: *Jack And The Beanstalk*."

It was however, *Cinderella* that captured the theatrical headlines. "I first put it on in Oxford when I was director of the Oxford Playhouse. That was late in 1973, early '74 and at the end of '74 it moved to the West End to the Prince Edward theatre with Twigg as Cinderella. "What," I asked him, "made you even think of Twigg in this context?" "I didn't. That was Lord Delfont. He has an instinct for the kind of thing. She was marvellous. I never believed in star quality, but she had it. She had never appeared on stage before but she worked hard and never faltered at all. She gave a very truthful performance. One critic said 'She can't really sing, she can't really dance and she doesn't really act either but she doesn't put a foot wrong.' She was really magical."

Hauser's *Cinderella* sticks very closely to the fairytale with just a secret twist near the end. All the usual characters are in it including Humpty, the Fairy Godmother, the Ugly Sisters, the Prince, and so on. There are two acts and lots of scenes, about fourteen musical numbers and two poems!

Frank has assembled a superb cast for this show. The only unknown quantity is Cinderella herself. "I was looking for a girl about eighteen and it is difficult to find one that age who has had a lot of experience. I auditioned a lot of girls and chose Jane South who now is to the MTC, but has appeared on

Young Talent Time, sings and dances well and is pretty. The Ugly Sisters make a marvellously funny pair. Frederick Parslow is the mean and nasty one and Noel Porter is the girlish and cosy one. We have one scene that is a Western which is very funny. It almost stopped the show in the London production. All the costumes for this are typically Western too. In this scene Fred Parslow is Calamity Sal and wears a very Naughty Nineties kind of costume with a leather hat and



Noel as Ugly Sister

Noel is a kind of Marlene Dietrich type as she was when she sang "The Boys in the Back Room".

In this pantomime there are very few topicalities because I like the feeling that it all happened in November 1 and long ago. The clothes are mostly 18th century but the Western scene is an exception. In Oxford I had two Australians in the cast and three in London. The third was Rob Munnery, whom I'm sure you've seen many times. Amusing because of this an Australian note crept in at a time when I had no idea I'd be doing it in Australia, but I won't tell you what it is, except to say it brought the house down."

The music for the pantomime is fairly simple and there are some very tuneful songs. Jonathan Hardy is Humpty, the villain who sings a number, "I'm the King of the Castle". He's a very villainous villain. Noel Porter sings a song specially written for the Melbourne production called, "Meat! Meat! Meat!" and in the Western scene, Fred Calamity Sal Parslow sings "Calamity Sal". David Ravenwood is the Baron, a slightly



Noel Porter

should know, children too will love it. In England it played to hundreds of children as well as adults, and as if to emphasize that, he adds quite firmly, "It is not blot at all because I hate that sort of thing in a pantomime and I would spoil the whole other world feel of it. So as Christmas entertainment,

works, inventor who has invented a man-eating, three metre high machine that has been made in the props department. "It's pure Heath Robinson," says Frank and the children, in particular, will love it. Because David has such a soft, good voice. He written a special number for him. "Our Little Home." Snicket is the broker's man and he and the Baron are both gnomes, and he's the tall thin character."

All this time there's been no mention of the Prince. "He will be played by David Downer who is a suitably good looking. The Fairy Godmother is Sandy Gray who has the particular ability to fill her soft, deep voice with the sound of laughter and also great warmth. The Queen Mother is Betty Bohlen and the Prince's wife, Dandelion, is Roger Oakley, while Bottoms will be played by Gary Downer. "What exactly is Gumbel's role?" He's a new character I invented. He's not in the fairy tale. As I said, he's the villain. He's the Prince's uncle who will inform if the Prince doesn't marry by the end of the week. At one stage things look bad and Bottoms exclaims: "Don't tell me we're going to have an unhappy ending. There are six children in the cast which means we have to have twelve so they can alternate and as well as the two

which is all right occasionally but not when it goes on all the time. Hanger's *Cinderella* is not like that, but it does involve the audience. He tells me that "The essence of good pantomime is getting the whole audience into the children's frame of mind so there is a tremendous involvement through the music and the whole magical feeling of it. It all looks very exciting and lovely and you must believe that anything can happen, but when it does, it must have a kind of logic and there must be an element of suspense. The production can never be static and the audience mustn't be allowed to sit there passively. So the idea is that story must move and the audience must be actively involved and concerned about what's going to happen."

The production is quite elaborate. In London we had a full orchestra which is very expensive. We're going to manage with a band of four musicians. Robert Garvin is the Musical Director and Collette Mann who choreographed the dance at the end of *Beverly Hills Cop* is doing the choreography and producing the dance numbers. You'll be surprised at how well the cast cope with both the singing and dancing. The costumes are quite elaborate and apart from in the Western scene many of the characters wear green and purple wigs. We only use the full depth of the stage during the Ballroom Scene and it manages to look enormous. Expensive? Well, I suppose so. In England, there are hardly any full-scale pantomimes any more because of the cost. You need singers, dancers and an orchestra so there's usually only one big one a year."

Frank says that conditions of work with the MTC are better than those in England in many respects. "The reason for this is because the MTC has the whole operation under one roof. Costumes are made, scenery is built and rehearsals all go in the company's workshop in South Melbourne so you don't find that just when you want a couple of cast members to run through a number, they're off in another part of the city having a fitting. You don't lose people here and there's no time lost. There are not many companies with those facilities. Altogether I'm very impressed with the standard here. I had no more problems with the very

difficult lines of *Peter Pan* than in the UK. It was difficult here and it was difficult there and I think the company did very well. As far as *Cinderella* is concerned, I'm delighted at this stage. The cast is really very talented and Parslow and Perry are really going to have audiences roaring with laughter."

Awarded a CBE for his work in the theatre in 1968, Frank, who was born in 1922, has been a freelance director and producer since 1971 and expects to remain one. "I have an element of



Fred Parslow

uncertainty, but it is less wearing and less stress. Before I came out here this year, I toured Frederick Lonsdale's *Cosmos*. Sometimes I sing with Nyrie Dawn Perry. We had trouble getting a career that would be sure to sing. In the first act, it isn't supposed to sing at all. Well, we got out, that would sing but it started in the first act and wouldn't stop. We managed in the end but it was quite a problem."

So many people in Australia go away for Christmas, that companies have tended to ignore the Christmas spirit and our theatres haven't really given us a great deal of gifts at this time. As *Cinderella* will run throughout the school holidays until February 2nd and most people only go away for two or three weeks, the MTC should be able to count on full houses a good part of the time even with extra matinees. Subscription bookings sell the seats but do not necessarily fill them. This time with a rickety romp like *Cinderella* we should all be able to enjoy a very happy Christmas time.



Fred Parslow as Ugly Duck

points, we have of course, approached a gnomel in."

One of the things that puts a bit of purple off pantomime is the screaming that goes on in moments when one of the characters asks the children to shout out loudly if the villain is near,

# CHRISTMAS

## S H O W S

### *The Virgin — A Nativity Play* By Pamela Ruskin

Murray Copeland is an academic turned theatre man and, unlike someone with his background of scholarship could have created this play. *The Virgin* which the Hoople Theatre will have as its Christmas attraction. It had to be written by someone who had studied medieval English and the old miracle plays so perhaps a little information about the shaven-headed Saint is relevant.

He doesn't sound like a Scot because "my parents tried to bring me up without an accent, moving it out along the way." So there's just a soft burr that sounds more English than anything else. He studied English literature at Oxford but even then was interested in theatre and before he graduated appeared in plays there. He became a teacher of English Literature and in 1960, went out to the Sudan and spent four years teaching at

the University of Khartoum which he loved.

Then he went to the University of Toronto, lecturing in English Literature until 1967. It was on his way to Cairo when the Six Day War broke out so he went to Ghana for a year instead. Did I like it? No! The humidity was terrible and after a year I'd had enough. In 1969 I came out to Australia. I was moving slowly from the academic life to the theatre. I taught drama under Wal Gurner at Flinders University in Adelaide and I began to do quite a lot of acting with companies around Adelaide.

As well as acting, Murray was writing and directing. "I directed a medieval play while I was at Flinders, called *Gargamish*. It wasn't religious, but a heavily witty, humorous collection of sketches put together into a revue. I designed it too. It had never been translated before so that was rather a challenge. It was put on during the 1974 Adelaide Festival and was very successful and then the ABC gave it a first run as one of their 13 minutes productions last year."

At this point Murray decided that he had had enough of the academic life. He resigned from Flinders and in 1975 went back to England and then to Europe to think about his future. He

wanted to cross the bridge from the safe, triumphally secure life of the university, in the precarious life of the theatre. "I decided to make the change. I came back to Australia the following year and to Adelaide where I was thought of as an academic, but to Melbourne I took two years for me to get anywhere at all and I've had to reduce my standard of living drastically."

He was the lead in a one act play, a comic role, called *The Son* that put on by the Victoria State Opera as part of a season of contemporary music theatre. Then he was commissioned by them to write a short play called *The Apology of Dionysus* in a similar series and he did the new translation for the Vic Opera's production of *Oedipus in the Caverns* of New came an ABC play-reading of a play of his called *The Shavenhead*.

"My first real breakthrough was a play of mine called *Dance For Death*, produced by Hoople Theatre at the Playbox. I've been working more or less continuously since then for Hoople, particularly directing plays aimed at school leaving audiences *Amateur* and *Master* among them.

The advantages of having a director playwright with a solid intellectual background in literature are obvious and Carillo Gammer, and Graeme Mandell of Hoople were not slow to realise this.

And so to *The Virgin* which Murray says is "my last major work. I put the script together from a whole lot of medieval miracle plays all connected with the Nativity. Originally these miracle plays were little one act plays, and I have chosen some and woven them together into a continuous narrative play in two acts. *The Virgin* is focused on the figure of Mary, and the play begins with her betrothal to Joseph and ends with the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. There are a lot of medieval legends all attached to the Virgin Mary, woven into these little medieval plays and I've used some of these. Some are quite strange and not known at all today. These plays elaborated the characters quite a lot. Some saw Joseph as an old huckster carpenter who never wanted to get married in all. He was very suspicious when Mary got pregnant and it wasn't until the Angel came down and



Rehearsal of "The Virgin"



Murray Copeland, director of *The Virgin*

exploined the miracle to him that he accepted her story. That's the Joseph of my play."

There is quite a lot of humor in these plays and Murray has tried to bring this out. He says that he has tried to keep in the medieval verse words but "I have updated words and phrases that simply wouldn't be understood by modern audiences. I hope I've done it discreetly and kept the medieval flavor. There is quite deliberately a clash of styles. Medieval text, 18th century baroque music, 19th century costumes, some with a slightly pioneer Australian feeling about them. The costumes and set are designed by Steve Nolan who has worked with the MTC, and in September designed the Victoria State Opera's *Don Quixote*."

The reason that Murray Copeland has the mixture of styles in *The Virgin* is based on the miracle plays themselves. He says that these plays were very sophisticated and witty, and their writers, for instance used a lot of deliberate anachronisms. While the shepherds, for example, are travelling to Bethlehem for the birth of Jesus, they will wear 16th century dress and when Mary and Joseph are betrothed they are betrothed by a bishop. This was deliberate. They knew what they were doing. "They were trying to develop the double time happening simultaneously, the time of the nativity and their own time. These plays are attractive to people today because they came from an age of secure religious faith and people today feel very nostalgic for that. The 18th century baroque music and the 19th century costumes both reflect a secular period of secure religious faith."

*The Virgin* is playing in the main auditorium of the Playhouse and will run until December 15th. Conlin will play both Joseph and the sheep thief, Mah, and Margaret Cameron will play Mary and Mah's wife. All deliberate doubling of parts. Harold Bogen will play the First Shepherd and Peter Ford (Gabriel). The other parts are minor. There's a lot of fine churches and church organizations will be encouraged and Hoopla hopes that *The Virgin* will attract religious members of the community as well as their regulars, who may or may not be religious.

# PUB THEATRE



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# NIDA

## KEY TO THE DOOR?

NIDA was twenty-one years old this year, having been established in 1958 under the auspices of the University of New South Wales and the Elizabethan Theatre Trust. The National Institute of Dramatic Art is still the best and most respected training establishment for theatre practitioners, but its future at that is looking dim, and without substantial help won't decidedly prove.

The exams held on the NSW University campus which consume NIDA are remarkable. At an impoverished primary school, their rehearsal rooms consist of five classrooms in which the largest is 30 by 15 feet and nine feet high. This year they have been training a total of sixty-six actors, this means a movement class of fifteen first-year students has space for a couple of jumps either way and for fencing they have to hog time at the gymnasium. Classes have to be taken in bull groups because of the cramped conditions, which unreasonably doubles the amount of teaching necessary.

The two workshops are similarly tiny indeed, one might danger one in terms of fire hazard, and the design rooms have scarcely enough space for the two to place students to draw, let alone construct models. En route you also pass the resident designer's office, a luxurious five by four feet and the hole in the floor that students drilled so the rain water will drain away on wet days.

John Clark, director at NIDA, has a comparatively acceptable office at the

pleasant administration building, the "Warehouse", but talks of a growing change of attitude among his staff.

"Up to a few years ago everyone was aware of the discomfort, but tended to put up with it, then it proved devastating. But if you looked around the country there were no other schools and most theatres were no better off than us. But since that time things have changed radically. Now you look around and practically every theatre which are all taking our graduates is which better off. We're getting the big arts centres which are not lavishly, but reasonably equipped, and we can't teach people the skills they're going to need to work in these places. Up until now other schools like for instance at WAIT, IDIAF and the Victorian College of the Arts, well now, you look about their standards in the moment, but they're better housed than they are and now it's beginning to get very irritating."

Their lack of facilities will doubtless start to affect the intake of students at NIDA. The Centre of Performing Arts at Adelaide has started a private stage management school run by Bill Goote, who taught at NIDA until 1975, and which took in first students this year. The result has been that there are no applicants this year to study technical theatre at NIDA from Adelaide.

If people are being well trained in Adelaide, then theoretically it doesn't matter, as Head of the Acting Course, George Whaley, points out, "but what

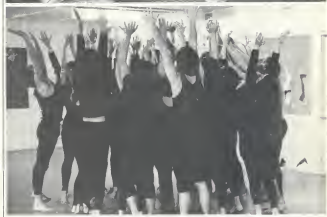
we are worried about is our facilities dropping so far behind that the ones who do come here will not be adequately trained, and not only technically, but in acting. You can't talk about training actors without taking into account their use of a certain sort of space. We don't have spaces adequate to proper voice and movement training. We always make do, and we turn out excellent graduates, but it's having to make do."

Indeed, it is becoming increasingly obvious that any theatre of less than 1,000 seats is quite uneconomical for a royal subsidised company. With present economic pressures there is quite likely to be a clamp down on funding for many small theatres and larger theatres and cultural centres are springing up in every major centre right through to Alice Springs. Actors who have not been trained to work in large spaces may find the going very tough.

Whaley and Clark eye the original NIDA production of *Mean Person*, the actors in which found the Parade a big step from Bond Street, and third year students who tour to Newcastle, finding the 200 seat theatre there, enormous.

And what is NIDA's position with its theatres? Since the demise of its offspring the Old Fort, NIDA has retained the old Tombs building theatre for the use of University students, in return for the Parade Theatre on the Western campus. **See**

*Continued over page*



they cannot use the Parade as yet, not until some money can be found, and from John Clark's description its present state is incredible for a theatre so recently inhabited by a major company.

"All the equipment, lighting and sound, is old and worn out, the sound system is a value one and the lighting patch panel is downright dangerous. The male plugs in it have 240 volts running through it, so you can't give students permission to use them. The thing system has no safety locks, not counter balanced nor brake checks, it would only take one student to enter the wrong line and you could drop a down light on someone's head. The lot's had its own trained technicians, but that's not good in a teaching theatre. We've requested funds from a number of sources to make the place safe and usable. We could move in now, but once you get there and start using it people won't take any notice, so I refuse to use it until it is safe."

The tiny Jane Sargent Theatre has been leased by the University of NSW for NIDA since 1966 and was set upon equipment by a 10,000 Gulbenkian Foundation grant. Now the theatre has been sold, the University feeling to pay it for NIDA and the Federal Government wouldn't support the State Government who were agreeable to take it. They have some hope of hanging onto Jane Street for teaching purposes and the yearly professional season, if only because everything in the theatre - seats, taking stage lighting - all belongs to NIDA, but it doesn't help their present feeling of precariousness.

But NIDA needs more than a decent theatre. Ironically its present workshop facilities are too small to build adequate scenery for the Parade. Vice-Chancellor Mier of NSW has said that he hopes to see NIDA housed completely on the Warring campus around the Parade. But so far so good has been taken. What saved the staff is the thought of being spread-cagled across campus or even city, with the theatre miles from workshops and administration somewhere else. Not only would it make life impossible with the tight timetable they keep, but such dispersion was a major factor in the death of the Tone.

NIDA's relationship with the authorities who will determine their



John Clark

future is one with very little power. The institution lives in the University of NSW rent free and receives hidden subsidies (such terms as cleaning and mail services) but the University has no responsibility for it. And of course universities themselves are undergoing serious cutbacks at present.

Like many subsidised theatre companies NIDA is a company limited by guarantee, as such a need to be funded by the Australia Council, but now receives a direct grant from the Tertiary Education Commission (who most unusually and prescriptively took over their funding without making any stipulation as to standard or type of training). The irony is that their facilities couldn't be much improved while under the Australia Council, which does not give capital grants, and the move to the Education Commission coincided with cutbacks in capital funding there. In 1972 there had been the possibility of some capital funding through the Australia Council, which was unfortunately put in its "overseas expert" phase. NIDA did bring in Norman Exelbourn from England, who reported to the Council that NIDA's accommodation was a disgrace, but by the time his report got through it was 1974 and the Warring generosity had been re-trained.

NIDA has been in a position to finance its own best interests. A constant reminder to please for help has been "If you're doing so well, why change?",

while massive financial failure such as the Australian Opera's sources and from the Government and private sources alike. It is too easy for the authorities to take advantage of an excellent staff who are committed to the work they are doing.

But John Clark believes that morale is dropping and a long-term position setting in. "We would like to see an excellent future with the Parade and keeping our associations with the University of NSW, but we unfortunately now have to consider other alternatives. Macquarie University has for some time wanted us to move out there and be close to the Film and Television School, we refused before because it was far out, and away from theatrical activities, but we may have to think again."

"Another worse situation is that U.S.W. teaches music and drama, but won't give us the facilities. Sydney University has neither, but has an empty building, the Seymour Centre. It's a beautiful complex and it has been suggested that NIDA might be interested and we think we probably are. Whatever happens, though, NIDA has to change and very soon. A school that is going to keep in touch with the profession is going to have to change and alter with it."

Perhaps the ultimate tip of a drama school is what its graduates take back with them into the industry. The list of now famous actors who started their careers at NIDA is endless and increasing all the time. To pick a very recent inclusion from the very first year names like Peter Cookman, Robyn Nevin, through to Helen Morse, Judy Morris, Kate Fitzpatrick, Angela Punch, Mel Gibson and Judy Davis. James Shannon is listed in the Technical Production course of 1965, and later Rex Gough and Terry O'Connell. John Bell's directing career had its beginnings while working at NIDA, and of course Clark and administrator Elizabeth Mather have between them run the 1979 Sydney Theatre Company season.

It would though, be most short-sighted to believe that NIDA can continue its essential contribution to the theatre without some consideration from the professional how much has to be put in, in order that the performing arts profession can go on taking out.

## WRITER'S VIEW

# JACK HIBBERD

### THE AUSTRALIAN PLAYWRIGHT

What distinguished him or her,  
uniquely the keen mind  
from Aristophanes, Strindberg,  
Fevdelev, or Wedekind?

Can it be gum leaves in the hair,  
the Kodak-like jaw,  
the paranoia, the despair,  
a country the world's floor?

Can it be lack of technique,  
or experience,  
a tradition, from the First Fleet,  
or El Dorado's stretch?

Can it be we are innocent,  
and export too much?  
Do we clamour for a Rembrandt  
before we've left death's hut?

Do we imitate day by day,  
all images hell?  
Only exploration will say  
and only time will tell.

Maybe started from the littoral in,  
we're still unsure. You  
brave creativity aye,  
find it or we are lost.

### SONG OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

I have the numbers on the Board,  
Sir Sylvester Zing is my mate,  
what he says goes just like the Law  
that's how the theatre operates.

I rule artistic policy  
the director's an addressee  
who confuses art with quality  
that's how the theatre operates.

Occasionally I meet the staff,  
in the corridor when they're late,  
advise with a frown or overdraw,  
that's how the theatre operates.

Actors I've seen come and go,  
like livestock through a set of gates,  
we always get enough per show,  
that's how the theatre operates.

As long as the houses are full,  
we top up last year's aggregate.  
I will cop sweet the critic's bull  
that's how the theatre operates.

I have a knighthood in my sights,  
to show the poshies how I rate,  
that people drive their theatre trade  
that's how the theatre operates.

The lowest denominator,  
the smart way to manipulate,  
give them this, they're sure to applaud  
that's how the theatre operates.

Dress it up and work them to death,  
wear dinner suits, ingratiate  
the foyer's full of three-car wets  
that's how the theatre operates.

### SONG OF AN ACTRESS

Bury me with Thelma's' hose,  
the distaff of a witch,  
I've always been anthesis of heart,  
a little on the nose,  
too fond of vile quips  
for Crowdie's part.

Bury me in a widow's words,  
or a charlatan's hat.  
I've relished both Pistol and Nym,  
from Liverpool to Leeds.  
I've played heads and hags  
in brilliantined lungs.

Bury me in a cowbird's call,  
the burlap of a show,  
I hear a costermonger's voice,  
a bun bread as Nepal,  
cat oyster, beetroot,  
and anamorphic boys.

Bury me as Juliet's nurse  
in a scholar's gown,  
I want no Friar to lament  
across my one-wealth heart.  
I never once gave  
a false performance.

Bury me in a keg of beer,  
beneath some theatre's planks.  
Samson up Caliban and War,  
a whole company to cheer  
me with lecherous pranks  
one last night of sport.

## NOTE TO DAVID WILLIAMSON

[David, while you were a Professor at Aarhus, Jutland, Denmark, did Australian caricatured egghead mafia knife you in the back.]

No such plot, though they'd hardly have the gall face to face not only are you our most successful, you're the tallest male.

Teachroom views are explicable, however given Heineke and I Am, and you did once say absurdism is something worked off in youth.

If this be fact, some of us are the kindergartners of the century.

and will have to wait epochs, as in *Godot*, for adult philosophy.

Yes, I wouldn't feel too embattled, they, hard from their parapsycho, and the price is hardly cruel—every second play is your best yet.

I haven't seen or studied your latest work, *Thou Shalt Not*.

though Len Rada, claims, and you imply, a more experimental course.

it's composed in scenes of thirty-seven semiotic scenes, one so uncharacteristically brief, it's almost gone before it's been.

The unShakespearean techniques, plus the forth tables you invent

could force many, a loyal Melbourne back-stabber Staceywards, to repent.

Still, David, consider those whose plays have often been fragmented,

who do not see the universe as it purports to be represented.

John Romeril, for example, whose excellent 1971 *Mrs. Thelma F.*

has rotting in a drawer, unheralded by any printing press or even Jake, prone to previous pauses and carmineque verbiage.

is there only one way to ingrate our absurdly and stage?

## OPENING NIGHT

I loved the sets, the lights, design, though the performances just great, then the play expanded the mind, up until twenty-five past eight.

I go to a play full of hope to the clubs for definite links to culture I'm socially repaid, now that I'm revolting rich.

I always doze through the last act thump my hands at the curtain call, talk of the show, marioning fact, how'd the cast remember it all?

My wife invariably dresses well, angles her declensions at the press.

I peep by the bar, what the hell if I missed a few nuances?

Now the laugh I enjoyed, the acrobats, blue jokes, and smells, I am just a working-class boy pretending to be someone else.

I loved the sets, the lights, the design, thought the acting near RSC, could not detect one whine of stress, we're no longer a colony.

The leading man could elocute, his vowels were misty Oxford though I believe he hails from Turin, and has never ventured abroad.

The gestures were fine, never coarse the dresses well-cut, opulent though one actress stride like a horse she'd hardly studied department.

The cast was all-Australian, the director clearly British, hence the elegance and class, the total lack of boorishness.

I sent backstage the best champagne, warned them mind to my house, out of costume, they all seemed strange, and talked in adolescent hawls.

## LETTER TO BRECHT

Dear Bert, I trust this letter discovers you only partly decomposed, that your black forest is really cryptic green, that from where you came you'll one day, an unconstructed Andak, return. As you may have gathered things are not too stable on this volatile globe, wars consume golden, pure power by the hour adopts another sleek sleek, machines thrash out lies, it grows more difficult for the plain bloke to think. The masses, in fear, in awe summon of Turgenev's strong grey bureaucrats, those who have no choice watch strategies and tactics delineated in *The Prince*. Still, then do your plays, as clankers of the culinary arts, or monastic meals, and sugar your better songs. Bert, you should've been a politician, or pure poet, the theatre has been your curse. The world's exactly, comically, tragically, the same, and it's not your fault that the bastards and bitches will not listen in the not too distant future another Hitler or harder Stalin could dance upon your grave, your texts already irrelevant.

# THEATRE/ACT



State Rep/Roger Purnell

## Comedy Fortune's forte

AFTER MAGRIFFE

By Roger Purnell

After *Magriffle* by Tom Stoppard? Sydney Theatre Company, Canberra Theatre Centre, ACT, opened 6 October, 1998

Director: Edmund Bishop. Props: Magriffle. 14 Minutes. 45 min. Paper

Original music. Adapted with: Thomas Stoppard. Magriffle. Dr. Henry. Windsor. Pat. Richardson. First. John. Purnell

(Photo courtesy)

This is their most interesting production to date: colourful, quick, and clever.

It's not easy to present several separate plays to a daytime audience where the lighting is minimal and the surrounding atmosphere distracting but Fortune has used the Canberra Theatre Paper consistently well. *After Magriffle* is not only a spoof on *Scrimshand Yard* and English eccentricities, but a piece about the nature of truth on stage. Objects do not merely represent themselves in this play, they're moving boards that are visible on every stage that are only allowed to

The theatrical highlight of this production was the relationship created between John Purnell, playing Chief Inspector Frost, and the sub-narrative *Warrior Family*. In fact, Purnell's performance was tremendous. He is excellent at comedy because he knows how to use his face and body when whispering out the lines.

Pat Richardson, too, put in a fine performance. She's better at playing the

non-realistic than the seriously tragic.

Fortune's forte was to comedy. They might consider doing a large-scale comic piece next year, as an opener.

If Fortune is planning on expanding and filling a gap in the ACT, then I hope they will be more bold in their programming. They ought to bring in international talent as well for direction is their weakness. Even this production, which worked, could have

been directed with more concentration on the richness of language and the way characters looked and talked to each other. Some of the visual language pure was lost. With so many good young directors short of work around the country now, I'm sure they wouldn't have any trouble bringing someone in.

I think next year will be a good one for Fortune.

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# THEATRE/NSW



State Rep/Lucy Wagner

## Superlative

### THE VENETIAN TWINS

By Robert Page

The *Venetian Twins* is a musical by Nick Enright and Terry Clarke, based on the play by Goldoni. Sydney Theatre Company presents *Venetian Twins* at Opera House, Sydney NSW. Opens 15 October 1979.

Director: John Bell. Musical Director: Bernard Cusick. Designers: Stephen Curry. Lighting: Graham Murray. Choreography: Nancy Bishop. Costume Designers: Sue Clarke. Stage Manager: Margie Wright. Cast: In *Veneta* roles: Rosanna, Anna Byron, Joe Jago, John Fawcett, Richard, Marc Lenoir, Anthony Tasson. *Dani*: Forrest. *Francesca*: Lisa Ewing. *Horatio*: Jennifer McGregor. *Florinda*: Lucy Wagner. *Urbio*: Tony Taylor. *Adriano*: Julie McVernon. *Marcello*: Stephen Lloyd. *Cleof*: Nicholas. *Orsini*: Anthony. *Gery*: Mike. *Forrest*: Clarke. (Professionally)

In a second season of Sydney Theatre productions, Nimrod have produced the acute and grande finale to the interim Sydney Theatre Company John Bell's *The Venetian Twins* is also a culmination to date of the best of the "Nimrod classics" style: updating archaism within the spirit of the original and adding wit and exuberance. Another of its attributes is the strong and creative contribution from the whole good union team, and the success of *Venetian Twins* is due to a good number of people.

Nick Enright's translation from Goldoni has preserved the heart of the original story, but turned the form into a musical comedy with more song than dialogue, and much of the exposition in the lyrics. Consequently it is concise and witty with some delightful turns of phrase and some very appropriate comic, while the songs are written at a variety of a vast range of styles, with commendable activity.

If any one component can be singled out as the major element of the show it is perhaps Forrester Clarke's music, composition and direction. The quartet played with panache his brilliant panache score which ranges through Coward, Berch, Puccini, Sondheim, Anon et al. The musical jokes were as clever as the verbal jokes and at the same time produced song after song of hummarable tune and tappable rhythm. The other great quality of the songs was that they were written specifically for the range and limitations of each actor — and in the main the cast are actors with varied singing ability, rather than voice artists.

Drew Forsythe is the twin is of course at the cross of the matter. The identical twins, separated from birth and up in Verona together, unbeknownst to each other, both to get married. Naturally their paths cross and confusion ensues. Forsythe's performance as Tomaso, the bright brother, was based on Derek Guyler (Pattin in *Please Sir*) — as was John Bell's in *The Sea* — and in each took on each

entrance, the applause meant for the other character as his own. As Zanetto the bumbling Australian (twice) was much more endearing and his song "Gang Back To Jindywarrook" became the theme of the show in view of this it is unfortunate that Forsythe has not altered the ending where, as in the original Zanetto is poisoned and Tomaso triumphs over his marion and thwarted love. Were it not for the somewhat anti-climatic finish there would certainly have been a standing ovation on first night, but the double shock (the villain who dies) is somewhat inappropriate and needs reflecting.

Jennifer McGregor as Beatrice was the other star of the evening. As well as her beautiful singing voice she is now developing into a consummate comic actress, her imitation Tomaso song was the highlight of the production as the fazed and poised and gave her bouquet to pieces.

Bell has type-cast but drawn superlative performances from his actors. Anna Byron was an ideal contrast to McGregor, and Tony Sheldon played the florid romantic hero in manner also Coward, fashion ("I'm no coward", "You're Neil Coward — you don't look like him"), but was another casualty of the imperfect ending, being left partnerless. Jan Ewing couldn't have been thicker as (the other) villain, and Tony Taylor brought some contrasting AFG melodrama to the piece. John McVernon, padded contemporarily, was a hapless Adriano and the most skilled choros in a marvelously ironic Gypsy number with McGregor and Sheldon.

Stephen Curry, only a year out of NIDA, impressed greatly with his acute and comical musical costumes. A trick from the Drama Theatre Stage right into the audience achieved a new intimacy, with audience seated on three sides and actors using the auditorium, galleries and "back stage" for different scenes and to watch scenes in which they were not taking part. It solved the postage slot problem at a stroke.

Graham Murray's complex but unobtrusive lighting plot worked in strongly with the pastiche style, transforming the atmosphere from sunny baroque to dream to fiesta, with subtlety and taste.

If a show which, despite Scale reservations, should attract critical acclamation. It once more proves Nimrod to be top company and will be a hard act for Richard Whelan's Sydney Theatre Company to follow.



Jennifer McGregor, Tony Sheldon, John McVernon, Lisa Ewing, Forrest, Anna Byron and Anthony Byron in *Venetian Twins*. Photo: Bruce Goss



# Not enough faith

POTIPHAR'S WIFE + 1

By John Wilkin

Playhouse • Rep • 7 • National Theatre • 1979

Director: Ken Hume. Design: Sally Foster. Cost: Margaret Fennell. Music: John Wilkin. Lighting: Stuart Morgan. Stage Manager: John Wilkin. Set: John Wilkin. Props: John Wilkin. Costume: John Wilkin. Hair: John Wilkin. Make-up: John Wilkin. Production Office: John Wilkin.

Playhouse • Rep • 7 • National Theatre • 1979  
John Wilkin  
(Photo: J. Wilkin)

The thread linking the three short pieces does not seem at all "thematic" in that they are all one-woman plays. The interest (and rather slender) lies in the different handling of the difficult issue by the authors concerned. Thus Hume's American lady reporter talks mostly to the telephone — which always sounds a bit contrived. Margaret Hillen's somewhat ramshackle contrived Melphusian madrigal addresses four dominies; the audience, the telephone and herself; the result is fulgent, but all the slowness of the play. Only Beckert in *Verd* gives the whole hog and has his unidentified Mischief speak into and out of the sand. And only his words — self-judging as they often seem — really grip the attention, not least by their usual expression through the actress's lips and teeth, which are, pretty well all one scene in a point of view.

As an evening it declined rapidly after the Beckert. Julia Madison (Clara) did so awfully thin, pale, strong largely on grotesque newspaper headlines and more pseudo-signified by being set two days after the German invasion of Poland in 1939: even if the audience realises that it can only say "so what?" Perhaps it is presumably meant to be the main piece of the evening, might have been better if it had been set by at least one third and given some kind of structure and direction as it was it was ramblingly self-indulgent and only momentarily lightened at the outset by some good turns of phrase such as one couple get in a letter from a talented friend. But a character who can say so neatly "Applied youth goes back at me" as she makes up in front of a mirror should have a richer vocabulary of positions than the superficial "looking". And after all the complaining the final resignation to "the Pharaoh of looking funny" (one of the first and best uses of this puns) is likewise pretty scratched. Mrs Hillen must stop writing, but this is a miserable play in more than one sense.

Understandably enough only the Beckert seemed to command the actress's confidence. Helen Wiece embraced her

line of semi-consciousness with great momentum, and seemed greatly aware of what her Mischief terms "all those contortions without which no speech is possible". But her Julia Madison was much less certain and lacked the tension over her face, but she might just (that night, last) have put the second play over. And Julia McGregor in the third seemed as unsure as her role, only clearly thinking what she was talking to since she was addressing the telephone and the unseen Pharaoh. A little of Dame Edna's involvement with the audience might have helped — we were not listening to a woman but watching a thing.

It was, was, perhaps, for Ken Hume as

despite its recent things would have been to get me active to do all these parts as an admittedly rather grumpy four-choice, coming the ladies, quite certainly, figure who looks up slowly at odd moments in *Verd*. At the same time there could have been a more elegant and self-evident argument about the set which needs to solve three quite different problems, but rather lumbered them. Though the dances were fine, and the slides depicting them were a top left ball, but not a member of them. The feeling I was left with was that nobody had enough faith in the whole programme to give the evening other momentum in shape.



Julia McGregor in "Potiphar's Wife + 1"







# THEATRE/SA



By Susan Vile/State Rep

## Second half drops off

### BAGGY GREEN SKIN

Author: James Alan Fox. F. J. Willert. Natick, Mass. Library Company. Subjects: SA, Playhouse. Opened 11 October 1979.

Director: Kevin Palmer. Designer: Michael Roberts. Lighting: Nigel Longue. Musician: Michael Fuller. Ball: Anne. Richard Anderson. Don Baker. Helen Browning. Linda Dorman. Robert Smith. Susan Jansen. Richard Janssens. John Saunders. Peter Schmitt. Tony Swanson. Tony Thornton. (Forthcoming)

"I had had wanted me to be in the army, he would have given me baggy green skin."

No speaks Fred Nette, veteran author of State Theatre Company latest military offering. (This year has already seen 4 *Man of French Warfare* and *Oh What a Lovely War*, Mark Twain's local playwright and co-national servicemen F. J. Willert. *Baggy Green Skin* deals with the mission of a group of Australians in Vietnam, focusing in particular on one "natcho".

Fred Nette is not quite your ordinary, everyday Dicker. He doesn't simply direct; he directs, shows, in particular political leanings, and displays an alarming concern at times. "Search rather dull?" he is in company, but dullness is easily overruled as he opens the play. Alone on the stage, he sits through his old tin trunk, remembers, and reflects, and all at once he is regretting, the recruitment and training days of his army past. It is easy to relate to Wayne Barant's pervasable Fred as he steps in and out of the action, knowing secrets, commenting on them, and even setting up



SA's *Baggy Green Skin*. Photo: David Wilson

"action replays" sequences. Points are made quickly and with a minimum of fuss; stock figures disappear before they can lose their comic effectiveness, and comments of politics just give an edge to the ballroom. A play, with something to say.

But the more changes to Vietnam, and with it the style. The economy of historical short cuts gives way to the circumstantial detail of naturalism. Now stock figures remain too long to be funny. Forerunner Fred cannot hide his dullness; he runs the bar, rarely leaves the camp, and is not to speak directly to us again until the end. Our contact is gone. And although Robert Griffith and Tony Swanson provided some entertaining clues in Sgt. Major and private, although Kevin Thornton (died

on his manuscript to a possible even moving) drops another acting war division could disagree what the play had now become a string of loosely linked episodes with no real movement forward. The ambivalence is underlined by the insignificance of the ending as Fred drags in the tank and runs out in frustration. But there has been no build-up. His cashbox is empty. Nothing has been said.

Kevin Palmer's direction seemed to be affected by the play's structure, though competent throughout. It was less imaginative in the second part. Most successful was the set, which made an easy transition from spare economy to naturalism and occurred thoroughly, fast-paced.



David Harrowood (English) (1) (2) Water (2) (2) Harrowood, Peter (1)

## Single attitude

### PLAY STRINDBERG

By Susan Yoff

Play: *Strindberg* by David Harrowood. Stage Company. Adelaide 7/8. Opened October 1979. Director: Brian Debern. Stage Manager: Simon Rogers. Lighting: Leigh Miller. This: *Strindberg Little Folger David Harrowood built. Was single. (Photo: 1979)*

From July 10 to September 1 four members of The Stage Company conducted a programme of community and educational activities in the Northern Territory. In October Adelaidean noted three productions mounted during their tour: Durrenmatt's *Five Strindberg*.

It's a beautiful, written play. By reconstructing Strindberg's *Man 18* (1878) as a twelve-round contest, Durrenmatt has pinned the dilemmas of the original, putting away redundancy as arise in a spare, economic script which speaks directly to a modern audience.

Director Brian Debern chose to stress the "game" image. Accordingly, his actors moved like light-footed puppets, deliberate caricatures that danced, bowed, strutted and postulated with all the precision of mechanical toys. It was a complete concept carried through into vocal work as well as movement. But in the end, I believe it was a mistake.

For once the style was established, that was it. What began as a polished display of

skilled virtuosity ended as no more than a cold exercise in technique. The effect was to reduce still further the delving process that had already taken place in the adaptation so that one quite lost touch with the soul of the play. Even though Durrenmatt's version points up the comic side of the situation it explores, too the agony beneath the laughter: it has become, instead, absurd drama. But absurdity springs from a comparison and this production by defining everything in terms of a single attitude allowed for no contrast to emerge. As a result, changes of mood were minimal and lasting was at times an effort.

Given the limitations of the concept, the actors worked well. David Harrowood's ten-walker Edgar was married only by an occasional tendency to garble words. Deborah Lister. Alice was a darning, pleasing mistake. Ron Rodger achieved a needed witness as Karl. All three became more interesting in the second half, though I fancy the was due more to the brevity of the later rounds than to any change in basic approach. It was with a pity that they were not able to pursue the play at all levels.

## Concentration and consistency

### KASPAR

By Jay. By: Peter Handke. Translated by: Michael Boland. Theatre: Little Folger. Adelaide 7/8. Directed: J. Gwynne (1979).

Director: Keith Galloway. English: Michael Boland. Lighting: Richard Chubb. Stage Manager: Susan Yoff. Music: David Gwynne. Stage Manager: Simon Rogers. Lighting: Leigh Miller. This: *Strindberg Little Folger David Harrowood built. Was single. (Photo: 1979)*

Troupe made a judicious choice in deciding to shift from home base at the Red Shed to Theatre 82 for their production of Peter Handke's *Kaspar*. They were able to exploit the spatial and lighting possibilities of this flexible venue, while still retaining a sense of "rough theatre".

*Kaspar* is a play to absorb and store. It absorbs with its demonstration of one person's acquiring language—the triumphs, frustrations and absences in the learning process—and the immersion in one's original situation that in the most intelligent individual may be nothing more than a quiet recognition of one's place. It starts as *Kaspar* leaves the bewildering world of numerous things and attains the ordered accents of verbal absolutism, only to end as a splintered object, echoing the primitive business of gibberish or "words and meanings." A play of extraordinary power.

The central role is demanding for the most experienced actor. It requires vocal and physical dexterity, the ability to discover the intention from the surface sense of words, to indicate precisely the blurring of movement in movement. Controlled eccentricity. David Kirk was limited in both areas and consequently lost out on the extremes of emotion that can arise in the piece from which, by the way, *Kaspar* derives. Nevertheless, it is a measure of the play's greatness that, through sheer concentration and an unwavering consistency of approach, this company was able to capture attention for the main part of the evening.

Concentration and consistency were indeed the strengths of the production as a whole. I enjoyed Keith Galloway's imaginative treatment of the prompts. Voices only in the first two, then, materialised into heavy, wheeled, black-clad figures of constancy, all purpose and direction as they walked and stamped across the stage, surrounding Kaspar's mind with sentences and aphorisms and handling with care the technology of the communications media: tape and cassette, recorders, cameras, loudspeaker. PA system, video camera and monitor. Again there were weaknesses in vocal and physical control, but they formed acceptable interplay made up for roughness in other areas.

Yet most valuable against a backdrop broken only by unbroken, unvarying shafts of white, the play was allowed to emerge as Handke achieves in his prologue, not as a story, but as a theatrical event.



accessible quality and wit, she is hard and direct but not in a crude or over-the-top manner. As Esther, Anna Gallo had a reserved but like grace and total command in her very powerful lines all the rest of the cast deserve. Robert R. Hays brought forth clear well modulated performances which were helpful to the strengths and weaknesses of the new. To me most the play still requires considerable guessing in the first and second acts but the Foreman Theatre Company was to be commended for making the transition from La MaMa to the Playhouse as smooth as it was.

## In dazzling style

## LINE THE SHADOW A BLK

### The Researcher's Summary

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Factory, Method to Output Order ID

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The following students in Phil Weatherall's 1998-1999 class achieved:

1996: "Willard Lost" *June*; "July, Willard's Big Day"  
 1997: "Amen, Thy Kingdom, Willard's Day"

The January issue by Phil Witkin will arrive in about 1 day.

Don Hocking, Harry Jackson, Steve Judd, Melvin  
and Margaret James, George, Ed, Richard and

**The House of French Science in Black Studies** by JAMES H. COLEMAN

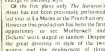
Naval (Diplomat) Navy Minister, 1874-8. Accepted Navy  
Officers

The Journal of Film Techniques features Adapt to Survive, a new feature film by Robert Decker, starring Barry Corbin.

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**Example 4** (early Fortran and Basic: *Grassman* (1964, 1965, 1966))

Whether drawings are sought here about some of the productions staged at the Power Factors, this year, a consensus is that the two best productions this year Stephen Sewell's *Tramcar* and the production of *The Skin of a Lion* have been also the best Australian work staged in Melbourne this year. And certainly the production and Powers respectively put paid to any idea that these newcomers are in the shadow of the old guard. Williamson, Hubbard, Rimmer and Oakley indeed take note of the season's upstart. Motherwell and Collins gave a can opener in dapper style.



James Stewart in *The All-Time Greatest* at the  
JFK Library, South Washington

Pentage calls a locally based, small-time, street poet out to him talking about his life in and out of jail. As the York, James Shavis was like a poet up steel and alternately snarling and laughing democracy at himself and the audience. The play was set on a high platform stage, bare except for an abstract back projected slide, and it effectively defined the audience as unwilling captives. Within the York's monologue there are a couple of slightly suggestive vignettes: a brief description of the bar in the Prisoner's social descriptions of a childhood at sailing *Weeks* in the pub; drinking under-age and escaping into the fairy tale world of *June Park*. The York's stream of





# THEATRE/WA



State Rep./Joan Ambrose

## Unworthy of the talent

### THE LITTLE FOXES

By Margaret Tucker

*The Little Foxes* by Lillian Hellman. The National Theatre Company. Playhouse. First. Opened 25 October 1979.

Director: Alice Munnell. Design: Tony Tripp. Light: Sally Scuderi. Cost: Michael van Schueren. Hair: Hubbard. Dress: Wilbur. Shoes: Hubbard. Jumps: Brown. Fur: Hubbard. Appl: Barbara Reynolds. Make-up: Rosemary Barry. Props: Marshall. Music: Melrose. Sound: Hubbard. Lark: Wright. Assistant: Giddens. Fly: Bower. Box: C. Music: Allen. Cast: (Performers).

It is probably not a good idea to revive Lillian Hellman's plays. She has an established position in the American realist drama, with a couple of Drama Critics Awards to prove it. And yet, her exposure of American morals, be they centred with the backbiting of Southern school-teachers or the dehumanising greed of the American businessman, come over as pedestrian exercises with varying chains of verbiage between the galling episodes of melodrama.

*The Little Foxes* really ought to be reviving theatre. The central situation is full of nasty conflicts, and a neat balance of villains and victim figures allows viewers that our sympathies are fully engaged. Except that the characters are cardboard. Strong cardboard, but still cliché. The Hubbard family of go-getters, who married for money, who cheat each other over money, who intend to use their children to secure their money, are the ancestors of today's television mini-series

For human interest there is tragic Aunt Berda who carries grief to her when disown in her head, remnants of a happy childhood, but who has to reveal to drink to cope with the horror of an impossible marriage. The dream husband of the family, Hubbard, has a heart-condition which just prevents him from committing the villain. It must take considerable self-control to play the top score, doing of a heart-attack, unable to reach the medicine, while his strong-willed wife looks on and lets him crash. All members of *Little Foxes* in the film version, and if they got hysterics, at least it could be cut from the film.

O'Neill, could get away with the words

he manages to combine glamour with positions, making coded by a controlled chilling laugh.

The men have to work on harder. Their characters being not merely cardboard but too dimensional as that! Alan Cassell as the good guy, Horace Giddens, manages the pivotal scene well, showing the two alternatives those could, but still seems happen in the showdown scene when he almost beats the villain as their daughter, Denese Schuler, makes a regrettable, first appearance as William Marshall, the common, outsider, whose heroism offer sets off the crisis that commences the action of the play.

James Braxton and Leslie Wright as



Alan Cassell and Rosemary Barry as 'The Little Foxes'

family saga that rummaged in past goals and regrets, so could Miller and Tennessee Williams because of the intensity and poetry that infused into their plays. But it would be kinder to let Hellman remain in unperfected legend writing atmospheric

Edgar Munnell's production might as much emerge as the play will stand. There is a truly magnificent set by Tony Tripp, combining the Southern Grandiose style with sheer visual pleasure. There are a number of excellent performances.

Notably, Jenny McNair as the charming and tragic Aunt Berda, and Rosemary Barry as the ruthless Reginald Giddens. She can only look superb (in some very stylish clothes)

Deane and Benjamin, brother and Noah, have some good scenes of alternating compassion and cut-throat competition, though neither of them managed to convert the playwright by creating a rounded character.

Do have a seascener to the Playhouse, played Alexandra, the vulnerable daughter, with quiet severity and it will be interesting to see what she does with a more complex part.

Presumably this is the kind of drama that originally gave 'the well-made play' a bad name, and although interesting as a piece of theatre-history it hardly seems worthy of all the talent involved on this production.

## Some brilliant conceptions

### SUMMIT CONFERENCE

By Colin O'Brien

*Summit* took place in Robert David McDonald Hall at the West Perth R.A. Sports Club October 1979. Director: Colin O'Brien. Design: Richard Hartley. Lighting: Roger Nathan.

*Two Women: Catherine Wilkin, Clara Petacci. Friends: Deborah Taylor, Geraldine Davidson. (Photocourtesy)*

"Where was the beginning and the end?" as a F. N. Elton parodied once, mused, remarked, "Tells the middle," and I'm afraid it's a bit that way with *Summit Conference*—a good theatrical notion well at times brilliantly acted, the play itself suffers from a degree of shapelessness.

The central action is a meeting in 1941 between Hitler's mistress Eva Braun and Mussolini's Clara Petacci at Eva's Berlin flat, while their war-time partners are in conference. The only other character is the winging SS officer who guards Eva.

Eva, played with unaffected ease, by an

unknown new to Perth Catherine Wilkin, gives forbidden American pop records and obscurely breaks the Führer's rules by ideal German womanhood by smoking and drinking. Clara commences with an the necessary far her being kept an open secret as Mussolini has to keep up the pretence of being a good husband. The women discuss their various roles at the same time revealing by their very existence the corrupt hypocrisy at the core of the racist dictator's supposed ideal and unswerving virtues. He degrades the women into the purgatory of their respective lovers' imping and heaving at each other. The first act ends in an ironic and harrowing tableau: the girls as an over-the-sexed dancing accompanied by Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries" (not played loud enough for me loved). They drink the 96 guard into their game by turns smiling and bullying her and finally drawing from him a confession of Jewishness. Later he has a long monologue on the repression of minorities, brilliantly handled by Geraldine Davidson. Some people have remarked that they found this monologue rather disconnected into the play, but apart from being himself introduced, I did not find it one of key with the dramatic conventions the play set up.

Wendy Davidson's playing of Clara

Petacci is a brilliant performance. At times I was a little unsure in that I felt she might slip over the line into a parody of an Italian star, but it is clear on reflection that a degree of self-parody on the part of Clara is deliberate: both feared and avoided violence in such a situation might well play up the role.

The play was written in Glasgow, Cumber Theatre playwright Robert David McDonald who also wrote *Chavalla*, which for me, money, because suffered from self-indulgence and loss of shape. Here the writing sometimes appeared gratuitous, not arising from the situation and the direction of the play, fortuitous. This was not helped by a lack of clear direction on Colin McDell's part. First his distance from the transitions into their lovers' roles by the women would be more effective most persons charged. There were also irritating mannerisms of detail I thought. Richard Hartley's rather high-keyed set a wrong conception. As Gailio Berles asserts in his excellent anthology of bad taste *Arch*, the Third Reich was fatal to the eye in 1941, good taste being a sign of decadent Jewish individualism. But reservations aside this was a good evening in the theatre, some brilliant conceptions and characters, not enough portrayed by all three actors.



Catherine Wilkin (*Eva Braun*) and Wendy Davidson (*Clara Petacci*) in the *Wales Summit Conference*.

# INTERVIEW

## Richard III and two comedies

By Irving Wardle

One of my favourite film paintings is of a dark, deserted landscape that turns out on closer inspection to be a portrait of Laurence Olivier in the robes of Richard III: a piece of graphic wizardry that completely sums up the role for the past thirty-odd years. No other British leading actor has dared take the comparison, and the play has been successfully revived only in the context of the RSC's Wars of the Roses cycle which by-passed the problem by scaling Richard down into a mighty character to a mere agent of divine retribution.

The challenge has now been met head-on as Christopher Morahan's National Theatre production which aims to reverse the tragedy from these unimpressive memories and restore it to the repertory. To restore Richard as a great acting part, of course, means having a great actor to play him, and there would have been no NT show but for the presence of John Wood, an actor whose speed, wit, magnetism, and sheer devilry give him an unrivalled claim to the role. And, as it turns out, this is Mr Wood's show to an almost dizzying degree.

His only near equal is the designer, Ralph Kishor who has converted the Olivier Theatre's open stage into a Plantagenet abbatoir, with two enormous wooden walls that slide and rotate with a thunderous rumble, and a raised metal floor strepped with blood-gates for all the on-stage bloodbaths.

In the set that supplies the first glimpse of Richard where anachronised shadows is projected on one of the walls as he babbles into view for the opening soliloquy. In hearing Wood's quavering I realised perhaps the most important of all, his chosen vice-regency: the ability to show you all his tricks and still let's us by surprise. Not for minute can you forget that this man is an actor, and of course the same goes for the character of Richard who privately outlines his plans to the audience and then

carries them out with amazing speed.

One great temptation of the part (to which even Olivier succumbed) is to engage the audience's sympathy in the first half of the play, only to lose it once Richard gains the crown and changes from a witty schemer to a straightforward butcher. Wood is at pains to avoid this. He evokes the public and makes them laugh heartily, he even charms them. But he never tries to make friends. He is a monster throughout an amusing monster to begin with and finally a terrible monster, with the result that the performance smoothly gains in power instead of losing impact at half time.

The scoring of Lady Anne offers an original departure from stage tradition. The scene usually hinges on this implacable of a readiness playing the perfect gallant to a woman whose brother-in-law he has just slaughtered. Wood gives us the perfect gallant, but once the corpse is undressed he almost mindfully, dips a finger in the wounds and licks the blood off. The effect, if you can believe it, is extremely funny especially when he immediately swings to the opposite extreme and soberly licks the corpse up again, holding the thread in neat hospital corners.

Everything he does is pushed to the limit: purity, wit, politics, self-analysis, and often he seems to go past the point of no return until in the nick of time he pulls the character back on course. Add to that his capacity for instantaneous reversal as when he savagely attacks a messenger to the ground and then apologetically brushes the dust off him and you have some idea of the electricity Wood generates on stage.

However, Olivier remains undisplaced for the simple reason that Richard is a venerable character who needs to be surrounded by strong personalities. "Leave this world for me to battle in," he says just as he gets on the NT's a shadow world of interchangeable lords supporting him in conventional groupings and offering him an assistance whatever it is a great performance, but it takes place in a vacuum even deeper than Eliot's deserted landscape.

Any goddam drama made out of it for me. Wood finds acquaintance with the October opening of *Uddle Eye Spread* (Lyric). Roger Halls' magnificent comedy on the fears and miseries of the washing

profession. As Mr Hall will need no introduction to Australian readers, a word remains for me to say that the piece survived its anglicisation (dinner table politics translated into Thatcherism) and the danger of turning into the Richard Bruce Snow with marked success, and that even after the inseparable comparisons with Aischylos and Peter Nichols, the reviving humour was left with a healthy respect for Mr Hall as a comic writer who does not feel obliged to keep mere fables of existence all stage, such matters being in short supply over here. There should be an eager market for the next Hall commission.

Of home-grown comedy, Anne Valery's *The Evening Her Parents* (Globe Theatre) takes a gentle look at a group of Arns recruits going through basic training in the last year of the war. What sets the piece apart from others on this well-worn theme is the sex of Miss Valery's recruits, all NT girls. First seen lined up before a lampshade, giraffe-dropping sergeant shaped like a tea-chest and willing under her threat to "burn you flowers of British command" into an efficient war machine. "Closed temple institutions hold an invisible fascination for British spectators and it is with the slightest contamination of Jack Penty, a production that one watches the women, public school girl, the Edgware underdog, and their clueless companions being lured into shape.

The action features a ludicrous first-light Indian hair-brain, and a nervous mare by the Edgware bellies work her back by getting pregnant under the terms of Paragraph 11. Regulation blooms bloom in the show, including one pair that got knocked in a backstair hatch. And the favour of 1944 comes drifting back in backstair rooms horses of 'I'll be squaring you in all the old familiar places." Of course they all wind up good mates, intimate secrets exchanged, class-barriers dissolved, but there is a good deal of fun on the way to the inevitable destination and the plot is as vital as any home

*The National Theatre production of *Thalys' Eyes* (RM 14/10) directed by Christopher Morahan. Left to right: Mr Warren (Cathy Ann), John Wood (Richard III).*

# ATIONAL







# DANCE



By William Schoonbridge

## Dance Umbrella — needs more experimentation

Choreographic, go-togethers like the Seymour Centre Dance Umbrella or the

Australian Dance Festival (of which more news) can be pretty messy affairs.

Money, for the organisers faced with the task of bringing all the performing groups together and shuffling them into some sort of order, means for the performers who have so little time to prepare and especially money for the audiences watching them or the critic trying to evaluate them on their own terms.

For the audience or not so much the difficulty of shifting perspectives, long-bulldozing is adopted at that but rather coping with the wrenching gear changes, emotional and kinesthetic, that are necessitated when they have to sit through up to fourteen works in one night, some of them so tedious and brief that one hardly has a chance to "read" them.

For a critic, the main difficulty arises from selecting the experienced necessary to analyse each work, performer, company. It doesn't do to use the same scalpel on the Aboriginal Islanders Dance Theatre as one does for say the Australian Contemporary Dance Company, the same intentions and training are worlds apart.

To be enthusiastic on the subject would take scores of newspapers, so in the space

available, all one can do is relate certain aspects, certain similarities that floated throughout the season and trust them, hoping to reveal the strengths and weaknesses in each attempt.

### THEME NO 1: DANCE WITH A SOCIAL CONCERN

With this type comes much talk of "constraints" and "experimentation", two subjects always pre-identical in the "personal annals of the avant-garde" to use Arlene Croce's happy phrase. The hope is grand, but when, on current evidence is the realisation? Where is the anguish of dance: the why, how and wherefore? / Unpacks the social conscience, where does mere suggestion end and incorporation begin? "Conscience" practitioners are also fond of going on about "Self" and "Feeling". But what is brought here and who is doing the feeling? Anyway so many of them have so little dance technique that it is impossible to tell if they have any feeling. Time and again the dance style reverts dance to the trivial statement, the body as metaphor disappears and the head as decoration takes its place.

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These reciters by and large retreated from the bewiling expanse of dance possibilities now open in this century and hidden inside a cozy spectrum of narrative topics unsubstantiated abstractions, or the hollow paraphernalia of "modern" style as the Dance Umbrella is composed, the works that fall under this genre are Bushbuck's *Captain Jack* (Goodley, Chebster), *Giles Adolescence* and *Adolescence* (Norman Hall), *Modern Dance Ensemble's* *Can* (David Schulberg), Margaret Haer's *Aboriginal and Bushy*, and the *Aboriginal Islanders Dance Theatre's* *Amharu Dance* (Carole Johnson).

Some of the above works, no better than others, some succeed in convincing us of their intended perfection. But dance. For a start, Bushbuck's *Captain Jack* is ridiculous, an imitation of being melodramatic in the Billy Joel song that saves it all.

Norman Hall's *Giles Adolescence*, saying far less than its programme note rings cynical and hollow at every turn. It has no theme, is "reluctant" and sure enough there are three solistes on stage going through an isolation school. But there is nothing to see in it, perceived or experienced reality, no life beyond the confines of the stage and nothing to even hint at a way to metaphor. There are no "social issues" in dance, only personal reason and that difference kids at Hall's piece while watching the *Aboriginal Islanders' Bushy Dance* with palpable life, action and force.

The confusion in question is the one built by aboriginal representatives last year at the Parliament House. Lyrics in *Amharu*, but the threads go back far into the whole question of land rights and cultural genocide. The work is a long, sprawling piece, raw with immediate demand and proposed change. What stands as the Prologue is an example of the whole work, this stand as symbols of the symbiotic relationship between man and nature that existed before White showed his face.

In fact, throughout the duration. White never really shows his face as such, all we see is the release created by his painting the drunkenness, wearing lacquered children taken from their mothers and finally integrated. A wide dramatic relationship hangs in the middle of the work encapsulates the discourse. The "Church" culture all after having given what consolation to a betrayed woman an abandoned black grove, tents and men on the stage as the "Antiwar Project" ironically unites the story of a black man having found God and becoming "white" with her.

Here is where the influence of "modern



*Amharu Dance*, choreographed by Carole Johnson. *Aboriginal Islanders Dance Company*.

dance" walk onto the stage and pre-empt the tribal style. The stomping rhythms disappear and "yearning" replaces their over-supplying arms, arching bodies and slow collapse. What the audience responds to here is not just the contrast (the dancer) or the material (the energy that directs the contrast) but the dance that activates the material.

We can see clearly the symbols behind the actual and it's that double whammy that gives both the solo and the work as a whole its potency. I say most of the work because the finale, with its harmony and "What do we want? Land Rights! When do we want them? Now!" betrays the composition and directness of what has gone before. The editor of Heinrichplatz falls down into the shrill common-sense place of agit-prop.

The choreographer of the piece Carole Johnson is an ex-member of the New

Pomona Dance Group of New York, that street-wise, more-conscious-than-thou contemporary-minded band of American dancer activists. I assume Miss Johnson is trying their same mind as a paradigm here. We'll see how it goes, but I have a feeling that under instead of expression won't work, just as Pomona and its pals have disappeared in America.

I also have a feeling that *Amharu* Johnson's *Dance* is more a collective attempt than a solo creation, and I hope it is. Miss Johnson has achieved a plangent success in constructing a real piece of dance whose time will last as long as the need behind it lives.

In closing, the Aboriginal Arts Board sees the Aboriginal Islanders Dance Theatre as more a rehabilitation programme than a growing performance group. The Board is, seems to me, more concerned in protecting pure cultural



*Fourteen Dancers. Photographed by Caroline Johnson. Aboriginal Dancers, Dany, Clontarf.*

artifacts. It belongs out to ask just what they really want. His and poets from an ennobled or dead culture as a forum wherein aspects of that culture can grow and develop, not for it to become a part of our cultural absolutism but rather for it to be the new material in regenerating it. Surely the performing arts are best suited to doing that?

#### **THERE NO B DANCE AS JOY AND JUST FOR LIFE OR TIN PAN ALI F LIVES!**

Why is it that when dancers want to be joyful they immediately fall into peppy platitudes and what this dance looks largely as if it were photographed in the sand bar? Has the idea of dance "kicks" got us there? They seek an expression of unbridled exuberance, but all this dancing

starts feeling and getting about is an effect, saying, "Don't you just love us and our tribe, wholesome healthy bodies?" Well no actually, because you have about as much impact as grains on the wing. This I think may be because so many of these performers need to get a chance to perform; they create in the studio surrounded by mirrors, and thereby forget the all important dialectic between the stage and the audience.

There are two types of Joy dance most predominant. Transcendent Joy, and Fun Dance, under whose aegis comes jazz ballet tap show dancing and hoofing. The first dance is practiced by the Derivates and the Salt mines or evident in works like Martha Graham's *Traptus* (*Traptus* or *Passion* or *Don't Humphrey's The Workers*). It is practically non-existent in

Australia which is hardly surprising given the spiritual desolation of the place.

The second is narcissism and its charming moments pervades the scene at practically every town. Ungainly Clubs, musical comedies and the dreaded Disco. What the poor half-squawed audience desires of this sort of dancing is the element of surprise. It must have fireworks, it must have outlandishness and it must be kept amazed.

The Dance Umbrella people did not achieve this. *Blue Bodies*, *Round 77* (Ross Coleman) and *Just as I said out* (Norman Hall). Canberra Dance Ensemble's *Joy* (Stephanie Burridge). New Dance Theatre's *Boys* (Ruth Gaskin) and a fair selection of the bushies and hunkies brought out by Linda Dance Theatre were all representative of the soggy results.

inherent in any, Barz, "just for fun" thinking.

Canberra Dance Ensemble's *Am* is perhaps their most amusing, my, too! It was set to Barz's *Amusements* (Canberra No 3) and that immediately put me on my guard. It was everything I expected it to be, witless, literal and so dependent on the wrong (almost) memory of the music that it had no life of its own. A wave of promising director, Ross Coleman's *Reid 77* was based largely on those premisses. It was richly danced by David Palmer but just what was he dancing?

If one can't get surprise, one could at least expect parody, as promised by the *Tricks* or *Jeane's* *Robbers' The Circus*, but those poor art performers didn't have the experience to be adequately parodied.

All there was some incidental parody, it was well parodied and quite successful.

#### THEME NO 3: DANCE AS A RITUAL THAT PARSETH ALL UNDERSTANDING

All of dance is mystery is ritual. The great past dance of classical ballet is ritual. Modern dance fringe practitioners seemingly are convinced that creative contemporary, contemporary ritual. The Aboriginal Islanders dancing those Mornington Island having scenes demonstrated that you don't have to be human and therefore to be ritualistic but the others take evidence through photographs to ward off violence and war.

A quantitative example of such evidence, thinking would have to be the Canberra Dance Ensemble's *Meat 100*. This is a collection of immobile figures draped in bed sheets standing around a solo dancer who shivers, writhes and goes into an ecstatic trance. The "meat" is a mass much of his moans, howls and shrieks from those immobile figures. No one knows what this is, a modern performance means and nothing is going to tell them that of all the choreography because there is no meaning, reference or intuitive interest in it, all we have is a situation.

Margaret Lawson's *Reds 100* was more successful. I grasp this point, under the initial heading because although it was pure dance without any overt narrative intention, the phasing and temporal associations of the two dancers, Sarah Hall and Sylvia Smith gave a challenge of Proust's central dance game.

Lawson's achievement in this piece is in turning the complexities of spatial deployment, speed, texture, density and shape into choreographic images and just like any good choreographer of the image leads the mind into an awareness of the association behind it. This is what true dance, ritual or otherwise, should do: the composition of choreography and the attack of the performer and the suggester

towards comprehension. They are suggestions and strongly created that therefore be no confusion for the viewer, no matter how individual his interpretation may be.

Margaret Barz's *Disfigure* was essentially that between a male and female body, but due to the sexual and physical of the performers all I could "hear" were the music and groans of complaining muscles and joints.

The actual ritual of Lloyd Newson's *Margaret* set to some music from *Am* was a high minded abstract Art Apache dance, it was energetic but sentimental.

Trying to stop something is a ritual too if given and Anne Gurner's *Am* was loudly reflecting, especially with the sound track of someone still recalcitrant speech about the village, played in trying to give up the habit. It was enjoyable because it was imperious but I wonder if it would be just as good without that backing.

#### THEME NO 4: DANCE AS ITSELF ON WHATEVER

The intangible field is the favourite of those people who don't really know what they want to say or why they choreograph. At most dance is ritual, all dance is essentially about itself, just like music. Balanchine has proved that, but most Australian audiences haven't yet committed unto the fact and it will take some time to make the shift. The *NOX* and the *ADJ* are two such little pieces but they are out of the frame of this article.

When the pre- and do make something in pure movement, surely is there anything in the dance design or the formulation of the dancers that makes that choreographic propellant visible. The shifting limbs remain shifting limbs and never become visible.

Into the last category falls Stephanie Burridge's *Coverage* *The Fun* and *Am* *Am*, Norman Hall's *Arched*, Virginia Foster's *Curfew*, Kim Kim Chan's *Fun*, *Recess*, Ruth Gaby's *Trunk*, *Trunk*, *Trunk*, *Trunk* and *Trunk* *Trunk* *Trunk*.

I could honestly say something about them, but there is nothing to say apart from the fact that they were all suggestive of a choreographer's mind alone, over never moving into game.

The whole *Dance 100* was a laudable idea, but there has got to be more and experimentation done to make it all worthwhile. I can appreciate the cramped quarters, the lack of money and the limited ability of the dancers standing when I can't understand it, the lack of ideas. Whatever these rigid dance people are "into" they're not "into" it very far.

There are exceptions to everything and some of the words presented are well worth keeping. As for the rest however, dance-makers couldn't force me back to look on them again.

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# OPERA



By David Gyger

## The future of opera

The all-stage turmoil which so dominated Australia's operatic scene for most of 1979 seems certain to be a major feature at the 1980 scene as well. The departure of Peter Hemmings as general manager of the national company after only a year in office, and the fact he was replaced late in October by an interim general manager (only Sydney selector Kenneth Trickett) condemned the Australian Opera to a further period of administrative uncertainty which must produce at least some undesirable side-effects in the artistic area, for performers can never do their best when they are persecuted by backstage goings-on and uncertainties.

Another operative development late in the year will no doubt prove to be at least as important in the long term as the unfortunate backstage manoeuvrings at the Australian Opera was the announcement on October 19 that the Australian Council had decided to hold an inquiry into the opera and music theatre scene with a view to recommending suitable policy in national terms.

Though there have been official protestations that this inquiry is not related to the Hemmings-Boroyge conflict at the AO, it is hard to believe that very seriously. Clearly any assessment of the opera scene in this country which ignored the plays in the street of the company, which puts on more performances and receives more subsidy money than all the other part of many go-a-combined, would be worse than useless.

Figuratively speaking, differences of opinion on matters of repertoire, casting and

touring policy—the total stuff on which the existence of any national opera company must inevitably depend—were at the heart of the Hemmings-Boroyge-AO board tussles. Nothing has been revealed by the departure of Hemmings except that the Boroyge view on such matters, which at least might seem to have the unquestioning allegiance of the powers which control the AO board, is now opposition-free within the national company.

And very few opera-lovers can lend much to respect at the prospect of an AO so completely, under the thumb of a man who has, to put it mildly, not demonstrated to date that he has the vision required to wield that thumb in the best interests of the development of the art form in this country.

Even in Sydney, these days, even in the subsidiaries of the AO itself, there are deep misgivings at the way things are going in the national company. Yet there is also a kind of gossamer syndrome, a feeling that what has happened must be had to happen even if an ordinary, mortal agent opera-lover who, coupled with a strong feeling of sympathy engendered by the past five years of operatic plenty when the Sydney Opera House has been the unchallenged focal point of the performing arts in this country as well as an international art tourist mecca, when all the goodies have dropped into the lap of Sydney opera-lovers.

### SHODDY TREATMENT

In the other major cities, and particularly in Melbourne, anger and determination are more the order of the day, anger at what local opera-goers feel is shoddy treatment by the AO, and determination to do something about it. In Brisbane and Adelaide, opera-lovers in general and the State companies in particular are enraged, not so much by the brevity of the AO seasons in those cities each year, which they concede perhaps is inevitable, as at the absence of repertoire which all too often conflicts directly with what the local company can do and would like to do. Surely the argument runs a company which can mount 18 operas in Sydney in a year and a few less in Melbourne, ought to be able to choose a touring repertoire that avoids conflict with the work of locally based companies whose repertoire must be determined within far more restricted resources parameters, both human and financial.

In the all-too-brief holiday days at the outset of the Hemmings era, they saw him outside Sydney as a big and powerful

friend easily determined to help them directly and indirectly—through the joint venture involving the AO and a State company through loan of human and material resources, through co-operative planning of repertoires. No doubt there are a good deal more complex reasons in detail why the joint ventures are in doubt for future years (it has already been announced that there will not be one in Queensland in 1980), but it is impossible to exclude some of the Hemmings-Boroyge row as one of the significant ones.

### EVANGELISTIC REPERTORY

In one extraordinary respect of course, both Boroyge and Hemmings are wrong on the same side of the repertory fence: in the belief that operatic truth is *Ver Wern Raden* in particular has a legitimate place in the repertory of a grand opera company.

No doubt they are at least momentarily right in the context of the whole of the operatic world burning with veristic outposts as ours. And even here with works no doubt have their place, if only as



Sutherland as Irene Glenary in *The Merry Widow*. Photo: William Morley

part of what must be a continuing evangelistic endeavour on the part of opera managements to expand the parameters of repertory, lest the whole operation stagnate, atrophy and die. The trouble is that since Boroyge became musical director of the Australian Opera the only excursions off the beaten track taken by the company have been up highways he wishes to explore, or perhaps, the world wishes to sing.

There are even some opera-lovers rude enough to point out that the Australian repertoires of Boroyge and Sutherland, both operatic or bel canto operatic, provides

unmistakable clues to the projected version: performing and recorded Sutherland-Boroyage repertoire, of the following year or so (not unusually, as in the case of Luciano Pavarotti and Placido Domingo) without more than token involvement of the local supporting forces? Is it right, they ask, that Australian Opera subscribers should be forced to choose, and that, in effect, the AD's only decisions off the beaten track should be at the whim of Boroyage?

#### TOO MUCH SUTHERLAND?

There is no doubt at all that Joan Sutherland is the Merry Widow has everyone has either appeal, a good deal wider, less office appeal than Joan Sutherland as Lucia di Lammermoor or Victoria in *La Traviata* or Desdemona in *Othello*. Those four roles, all of which roles she is singing in Australia this year and next. The trouble is that even as many of those who will flock to see Sutherland as the Widow, wouldn't be caught dead at a performance of grand opera, many opera-lovers feel deeply insulted when they are asked to pay premium prices to see Sutherland as the Widow.

Some even go so far as to refuse to subscribe if they must have her as the Widow. Does a make sense to drive away such traditional opera lovers in order to win a broader audience, many of whom will not be interested in progressing on to more serious opera works?

And some opera lovers, no doubt, are

small men, object to hearing Joan Sutherland at all because they dislike her unique vocal sound. Many object to seeing Joan Sutherland. Joan Sutherland and Joan Sutherland's year after year as the only international operatic superstar on offer in this part of the world. That would be good deal rather large for one year in two, say, in favour of the odd Boroyage, Spontis, Carreras, Von Stade, Caballe, Pavarotti, Cutugno, you name her or her in full your current preferences. Yet all indications are that the AD will be even more firmly committed to the Sutherland-Boroyage syndrome from now on than it has been in the past.

#### ALTERNATIVES

It is all very well, of course, to grovel around what we've got at the moment, operationally, but is there any real alternative? Are those Adelaide, Brisbane and Melbourne residents capable of doing more than just complain? The answer is maybe Yes, if well, there are quite a few, to be frank, but there may just be enough determination about to exceed them all.

At least on the surface of the matter, Melbourne would seem to have little if anything to complain of in its current program by the Australia Opera this year and next, the only two seasons whose planning was significantly affected by the changes as general manager, repertoire has expanded dramatically and Sutherland fans have had a field day

seeing the lady. This year in two operas she did not perform anywhere else in Australia, even in Sydney.

Unlike Adelaide and Brisbane which have received only a handful of offerings, each year and those hardly the pick of the year's AD repertoire, Melbourne has received a very fair deal in those years in an objective criteria. It even had the promise of a new production last year, *La Fanciulla del Tebro*, though, in horsemanship, logistic problems in last spring's new production 600-odd miles from home have meant no doubt a significant factor prompting the decision to give all the promises to Sydney at least for 1980.

Yet old mistakes die hard, and it is an impossible for Melbourne to concede they ought to be second-best to Sydney is anything, particularly anything cultural as it is for Sydney to concede such a coup to Melbourne. At the Melbourne Arts Centre is looking over their shoulder, even if no one is yet quite sure exactly when it will open, and there is a bigger Italian traditionally opera-loving population in Melbourne than in Sydney, and a far less of ready cash theoretically available to support the establishment of a major new company to rival the AD.

There are dangers it seems to me, in these arguments even conceding they have considerable weight. In particular, it is not very possible that the Sydney Opera House really was a one-off event, that the new Victorian Arts Centre, superior as it admittedly will be as a present venue for the performing arts, has no hope of rivaling the world-famous Sydney venue as a focus of attention and a stimulus to evolving audiences? And what of the proved and proved entrepreneurial fact at least in serious music circles that few Melbourneans per thousand attend performances than Sydney-siders? Even the Australian Ballet, whose home is in Melbourne draws bigger audiences in Sydney, bigger in relation to overall population, than it does in Victoria. All the above points may be somewhat prejudiced anti-Melbourne, but they cannot be dismissed out of hand.

And once having dealt with such possibly perverse and nagging objections to the all-around are major Melbourne opera company, one has to look at the plus side of its theoretical ledger. Politically it would be a coup for the Liberal Victorian Government to support the establishment of a new major resident company far in new cultural complex. The (Liberal) Federal Government could be prone to sympathise not only because of its similar political complexion but also because any such move would inevitably be a slap in the face to the (Labor) New South Wales Government, which has got all the benefits of the opera explosion in terms of



Sutherland as Victoria. Photos: Billie Wright



Joan Sutherland as Isolde in La Traviata. Photo: Peter Scarsia

performing presence from the national company and tourist trade from the Opera House (well without ever contributing a brass rubbe to the development of the art form).

Not to mention the fact that it could be a very good thing indeed, financially, to have another major opera company in Australia under totally different management from the Australian Opera, presently performing different repertoires and much of the time at least complementing the work of the Sydney-based AO rather than competing with it. This is a strong point, perhaps the strongest point of all, in favour of the emergence of a separate company in Melbourne as opposed to cellular division of the existing company.

#### IS A SECOND COMPANY NECESSARY?

But does Australia need a second AO-state opera company at all? Even if it could save one, would not the costs double taking public support beyond a politically acceptable level in those years when life is not meant to be easy? Not necessarily says the pro-Melbourne argument, for the vast touring costs now incurred by the AO would be cut significantly enough, probably to pay the costs of setting up a second chorus, based in Melbourne and having enough principles to make a new company functional.

The big problem would be rehearsal for the Elizabethan Melbourne Gyroscara is heavily committed to accompanying the Australian Ballet and would not have sufficient spare time to service an opera

company playing major seasons in Melbourne and Adelaide with the odd excursion to Tasmania or the West.

It is important to be aware of the fact that touring an opera company is a vastly complex operation that not only involves expenses alarmingly high at the same time actually reduces potential revenues by reducing the number of performances a company can stage. The costs involved in air fares to get the Sydney-based AO to and from Melbourne for no less than five men versus this year and three next, are enormous, but that is only the beginning. As well as people, sets and costumes must be moved as well as singers—a wide range of back-up staff living away from home allowances must be paid. Expensive rehearsal time must be incurred every time a production is moved into a new theatre, so two of which are identical in terms of dimensions and technical facilities.

An opera company that was in one house pays no fares or allowances, loses no time in performances booked because of travel or rehearsal time. And quite possibly is an artistically happier one than the company which tours extensively, for opera singers are human beings too and some even have spouses and/or children from whom they don't care to be separated for months at a time.

Add up all those gross ticket prices, combine the result with the maverick straight-out cash terms that arise when one is on the road, and the arguments for the Melbourne-based high profile opera company become very convincing. Add into the mix the additional artistic bonus

of a second management unaffiliated to current AO policies and personalities and the case becomes even stronger. The more Australian opera companies, patrons as well as those professionally involved, would benefit.

#### SOONER OR LATER

In fact, of course, there is no doubt that something along this sort line will happen within the next few years, the only question is whether it happens immediately provoked by economic developments within the Australian Opera or whether the pace is more leisurely, whether to put it bluntly the progress is by evolution or revolution.

It is very hard indeed to see the present status quo being perpetuated for very long at all. The Australian Opera has had a very fair go indeed as unchallenged ruler of Australia's operatic scene and there is sufficient dissatisfaction with its past performance and reluctant desire about the prospects of a better performance in the future if it left to its own devices under the present hierarchy, so that the funding authorities very well may feel obliged to do something.

It would be foolish for any one to see and guess precisely at the way things will happen, that will depend primarily on who replaces Peter Hennings as the helm of the Australian Opera and how much power he is given, as well as the recommendations of the Australian Council inquiry and what action is taken to implement them. One thing is certain though: Australia's opera scene is at least at least a couple of years of organisational turmoil.

The great dangers are that in the one hand the cracking edifice that is the Australian Opera as a now cannot be allowed to tumble on a unprepared landing from crisis to crisis with no more sense of maintaining long-term direction than in the past; and on the other, that parochial and personal disagreements should be allowed to provoke the ill-considered, premature establishment of a rival company in Melbourne.

The great hope is that the Australian Council inquiry will probe deeply into the whole scene and recommend sensibly, and that its recommendations will be implemented with dispatch. The great fear is that the Fraser Government will see the current crisis as an excuse for ditching opera altogether—an action that would set the cause back more than 20 years in this country.

Whatever happens, the 80s can scarcely fail to be exciting years for opera in Australia—provided only that heads remain cool enough to avoid activating any of the self-destruct mechanisms which are as touchingly ubiquitous on today's opera scene in this country.

\*David Gymer is editor of *Opera Australia*.

# FILM



By Elizabeth Riddle

## Tim - the full quid

The astonishing thing about *Tim*—a film produced, directed and scripted by Michael Pate—is that against all odds it almost succeeds as a piece of entertainment. Forget its theme—discrete, working-class related young men mistaken up by mature, stretched-up career women, love drama etc—it would seem to be an object of embarrassment to one and all, makers, cast and audience.

And of course it is embarrassing. From title to title, because in obvious or outright young men behaving like a mong, even a Paul Hogan parody of a mong, makes it hard to keep a straight face. But actually Michael Pate has away rather well with the theme, though the claim of realism made for the treatment is not exactly valid. It is the glum-ridden direction and camera work and the painfully slow pace, meant no doubt to be brutal, which endorses the criticism.

To spell out the plot, Tim is a 24-year-old builder/labourer and part-time gardener, mistaken by his former teacher for "Tim the full quid". He cannot read or write. His parents have developed to him the work ethic of a lawbreaker but not the taste of life and death. Raking Mr. Mary Harton's garden leaves in shirts or slacks that are just short of illegal. Tim now has interest and sympathy and she starts him off reading *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien. He likes it, and her, as he keeps saying, and craves cake and sugar tea. Also the beer he has with that, and Mary's cooking.

Against opposition from his sister Dickson, Mary takes him off to her Palm Beach shack, and they frolic on the sand just like real kids in a private swimming pool,

the shift might have gone on indefinitely, but for a family tragedy. Mum dies and then Dad dies, leaving the director-producer-scriptwriter a choice, at two intervals, and Mary obviously has to look after Tim. Mr Pate got marry, Mrs. McColgan is not about to let them cut into the sack without the marriage ceremony.

The catch to all this is that Tim is the person of McColgan—handsome, a little pudgy and a touch touch-tender—is obviously, is quite at what later says, "the full quid". He may not be Timon, but he is all there.

Some other questions have to be asked. If he watches all these movies on the box, is he dumb, then is it that he fails to note that people die? How has he got to be a handsome 24 without feeling the stings of passion? To put it rather more bluntly, even if he were, she would not come across much, just have chased and caught him behind the car's back, on a dark night.

In other words, the story is plainer. Regarding people of any age, do not look like Tim. In this actually, perhaps, an oversight, makes this point, when Mary visits a school for handicapped children to find out how Tim can best be taught, the strong people look exactly what they are, mentally handicapped, retarded.

Mary Harton is played by Patsy Lane,

whose last big role was as the first mother in *Centre of the Universe*, it is a good, if unheroic performance. But Patsy's real strength is in the casting of Alison Kerr and Paul Fyfe as Dad and Mum. Years on playing stereotypes have not lessened Kerr's ability to get his teeth into a role, and Mr Fyfe once again brings a whole new interpretation to the part of a hard-boiled, staid, working, irritating, lecherous young woman. Then came together, and with others, Smith, Davern's emotional as lines (Margie Lee and James Connolly are superb). They provide the only genuinely affecting content of the film.

I would not be ashamed to find that *Tim* makes some money. The audience, around it, was invited to share apart from some innocent giggles. It will do better at day-reviews than at night. For some, inevitably, given it has a Vot Recommended for Children starship rating, but making could be more unless it is the direct work. Fine Lipp's movie, was no-on-shy multiracially, map, antipathetic, suburban and beach scenes photographed by Paul Gorman.

Among Tim's investors were the Australian Film Commission, the NSW Film Corporation, Greater Union and the Nine Network.



Patsy Lane as Mary Harton in *Tim*



# BOOKS



By John McCullum

## Years of theatre

*Performing Arts Year Book of Australia 1976*  
Melbourne: Playbooks, 1976. Pp 415. \$6.  
*British Theatre Since 1945* (2 Vols) pp 52-54

At the *Performing Arts Year Book of Australia* for 1976, edited by Colin Croft, one is tempted to say "third time lucky" except that so much work has gone into it from a relatively small group of people that luck isn't here but much to do with it. When Volume 2 (1977) appeared last year I said, more or less, that it was useless — no much information thrown together with no way of finding the particular bit you want. Volume One was an improvement. It is clearly set out and organised into chapters and sections which are easy to find. Each company or producer is clearly identified. Above all, it has an index (of which the publishers are so proud) that they have put at the front of the book) which at a single stroke transfers it from a vaguely useful list of productions into a fascinating guide to the activity of the year. With the index, you can follow the work of a performer, play, playwright, movement or whatever, or simply find quickly the production details for any show, film or concert.

There is scarcely a production listed which does not have accompanying photographs, which makes it a good book to browse in.

There are still many inaccuracies, mainly in typography, and the index is by no means complete. There are also some odd differences in the space given to various shows and companies presumably caused by different material supplied by the publicity departments. The introductions to the chapters vary

considerably. Kenneth G. Hall and John Baker attempt some brief critical discussion of the way the book is put together but also writing about the remarkable A.D. but the others might just as well have spared their photographs and left it at that. The fact that Jeff Puryear does come up with the idea that the public should be given what it wants, and that we should make these business arrangements.

There are relatively minor criticisms however. The index could be more accurate and comprehensive but it is still an enormous help. Browsing through the book I am perfectly prepared to accept the publisher's claim that "it isn't in the book that it didn't happen or wasn't worth



recording."

The profile, Ronald Hayman has come up with another book, *British Theatre Since 1945*. In spite of an introductory disclaimer that he prefers to cover a limited area fairly thoroughly, this is a critical romp through some of the work of nearly thirty playwrights, which makes the few omissions look more pointed than the author intends. Hayman also disclaims any historical purpose. The book is subtitled "A Renaissance" — meaning a re-examination of the on-the-spot judgements of daily reviewers. For Australian readers, at least, an historical survey might have been more interesting.

The necessarily necessary critical judgement of plays are grouped into four chapters, each concerned with a separate critical issue. The issues are the use of language, the extent of innovation and experiment, political purpose and the use of the Aristotelian director-authority. The strongest but most annoying chapter is that on "The Politics of History" which seems to fit at a large and loose. Hayman is unsympathetic to the suggestion of artistic goals in political aims and seems annoyed that many of

Britain's more informed writers are taking their artistic standards up at odds to pursue political ends. He says "History" as a term of dogmatism but acknowledges that politics is the chief source of energy in the work of Brechtian. Here Political Correctness, Arden, Bond, and others. His proposals, in favour of reason and argument prevents his being going a full amount of one of the strongest sources of vitality in modern British playwrighting. He objects, rightly, that a play about individual characters cannot be a valid political statement because the generalisation can never validly be made. He acknowledges that the playwrights are not interested in rational political debate.



but stops short of saying that they are politically wrong, which is where his argument seems to be heading. His artistic judgements are really themselves political.

And yet these political playwrights are interested in individual characters. It is the recent British playwrights' great contribution to the modern concern with politics in the theatre that they are attempting to find ways of placing the individual through dramatic character firmly at the centre of the broad political systems and processes that portray, if it makes the best political argument it's still great political theatre.

The interest in character does refer us back to another chapter in which Hayman points out the lack of formal experimentation in recent British playwrighting. The writers have on the whole been only slightly influenced by emotional writers such as Brecht, Hume, and others. Hayman seems to have saved those up for another book which according to the excellent bibliography in this one will appear before this one is out.

After all this I promise for next month a selection of recent British plays.



# GUIDE

## ACT THEATRE

### ALSTRAIAN THEATRE WORKSHOP

ANU Theatre Group Children Street Hall  
Charles Stage by John Mulligan  
December 13-15

### FOR LUNE THEATRE COMPANY Playhouse (49 4488)

*Once A Canbake* by Mary O'Malley  
director: Anne Godfrey Smith Nov 28 -  
Dec 8

### REID HOUSE THEATRE WORKSHOP (47 0781)

Agnes Company *Never, Never, The  
Elgin, Hester, Mr Judd, You Judd*  
Throughout December  
THEATRE 1 (47 4222)

Canberra Rep. *Shrek's Melons* by  
William Gellens director: Ken Boucher  
Dec 7 - 23 Wed to Sat  
For further contact Margaret Hall at  
49 1182

## NSW THEATRE

### ACTORS COMPANY (665 2503 669 7511)

Workshops with The Corporal Mase  
Company December 1, 2 & 9  
ARIS COUNCIL OF NEW SOUTH  
WALES (357 6611)

School Tours *After Woodfolkinger*  
South Coast until December 13 *Blind*  
*BM* a children's play for infants and  
primary theater and North West until  
December 7

### CELEBRATE AUSTRALIA (66 6967)

#### Regent Theatre

*Juddycrime After* by Michael Bond and  
Allied Bradley, directed by, Dr Drew

### Commences December 28 COURT HOUSE HOTEL (469 6302)

Oxford Street, Taylor Square  
*The Over the Rainbow Show* by Rick  
Mason and Malcolm Frawley, director  
Malcolm Frawley, music, Sandra  
Ridgwell, with Susan Asquith and Steven  
Sacks Throughout December

### ENSEMBLE THEATRE (629 8677)

*Amadeus* by David Hart, director, Jon  
Evans Commences December 6  
FIRST STAGE THEATRE COMPANY  
(82 1660)

*The Muses of Theatre in Dramatic Form*  
by Gary Reiter, director, Chris Lewis  
with Angela Pearce, Doreen Corrigan and  
Garry Baxter Touring to schools and  
public institutions throughout December  
FRANK STRAIN'S BULLYBUSH  
THEATRE RESTAURANT (357 4627)

*Thanks For The Memory* a musical review  
from the turn of the century to today, with  
Noel Brophy, Barbara Wyndon, Garth  
Meade, Ned Bryant and Helen Loran,  
directors, George Carden Throughout  
December

### GENESAN THEATRE (55 5641)

Tongah or JJH by Noel Coward, director,  
Terry Hayes, with Charles Zara,  
Bernadette Hays and Gaynor Maxwell  
December 1-23

### HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (212 5611)

*Amor, the musical* director, George  
Martin, with Hayes Gordon, Jill  
Perrenon, Nancey Hayes, Ric Hutton,  
Anne Gregg and Kevin Johns Until  
December 8

Wander by William Shakespeare The Old  
Vic Company directed by Tim  
Robertson, with Derek Jacobs, Jane  
Wyndham, Brenda Bruce, Robert Edmond,  
Julian Glover, John Rowe and Terence  
Wilton December 11-15

### HUNTER VALLEY THEATRE COMPANY (26 2536)

In rebus until new year  
KIRIBILLI PUB THEATRE (82 1475)

Kerrill Hall, Mike's Place  
*The Weaver Show* by P P Craync,  
director, Richmond Young, music, Adrian  
Morgan, with Patrick Wood, Marge  
McCrac, Jane Hamilton, Paul Clubb and  
Rae Mahon Throughout December  
LIFE LINE PRESENTATIONS

### (478 9676)

*Alison Mine Theater*, programme of  
theater music devised by Michael  
Freeland for infants, primary and  
secondary, Until December 7  
Mike Jackson traditional bush song for  
pre-schools, infants, primary and  
secondary schools, country area from  
December 11

### MARIAN STREET THEATRE (485 3666)

*Servus* by William Gibson, director,  
Alastair Duncan, with Barry Gibson,  
Paul Maybury, Yvonne Adams, Ned  
Dugan, Dalores Erso, Keith Little, Alan  
Royal and Carmen Tanti Until December  
22

### MUSIC HALL THEATRE RESTAURANT (669 8222)

*Lost in the Devil* written and directed by  
Stanley Walsh, with Alexander Ray, Terry  
Peck and Linda Cropper Throughout  
December

### MUSIC LOFT THEATRE (497 6885)

*Five Angel*, a review by John McKillop  
and Ron Flares, director, Bill Orr, with  
Rae Foster Throughout December  
NEW THEATRE (519 3403)

*Amo and the Peacock* by Sean O'Casey,  
director, John Armstrong Until  
December 8

*Revolutions* by Dick Diamond, director,  
Frank Barnes December 14, 15, 16, 21, 22  
and 23

### NIMROD THEATRE (669 3803)

*Upstairs, On Our Sides* by Bert Bailey  
adapted from the Steele Rudd books,  
director, George Whaley, with Jim Blake,  
John Clayton, Dan Croley, Yvonne  
Garrett, Nona Heathmont, Robert  
Mansons, Barry Otto, Geoffrey Nash, John  
Seymour and Kerry Walker Throughout  
December

*Downstairs, Downstairs*, a SideShow  
Company production Commences  
December 12

### NSW THEATRE OF THE DEAF (337 1268)

#### Stables Theatre

*Double Anamers* including a one man show  
conceived and directed by Ian Watson,  
with David Landon, and an adult version  
of *Actors Speak Louder Than Words*,  
director: Ian Watson, with Nola Colfax,  
Margaret Davis, David Landon, Colin

Allen and Bryan Jones Until December 8  
**PLAYERS THEATRE COMPANY** (01 7211)

**Head Pantomime Theatre**  
Programme unavailable - contact theatre for details

**269 PLAYBOY**  
Programme unavailable - contact theatre for details

**Q THEATRE** (047 21 5754)  
Shows: 1. *Toski* by Debbie Pitt adapted by Max Hilland director Kevin Jackson with Ron Harker Alan Hall Peter Kingston  
Lee Anderson and Bill Conn At Remuera Town Hall Until December 21

**RITIRINA THEATRE COMPANY** (069 25 2892)  
Armeda Theatre in Kere Kere Until December 9  
**THE ROCKS PLAYERS** (062 6254 4204)

**Regional Centres**  
*The End of the French Show* by Stuart Smith director Anthony Bangley with Ben Franklin David Whynes Genevieve Moss and Genevieve Lorton Throughout December

**SEYMOUR CENTRE** (062 6545)  
York Theatre  
*Temple Joe* with Roderic Acheson Until December 8  
**SHOPFRONT THEATRE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE** (088 7048)

Free drama workshops on weekends during term and during week in school holidays includes playwriting, music, dance, sculpture, puppets, design, radio and video

**SPEAK ANY THEATRE RESTAURANT** (062 7442)  
*Rock W* director Ian Falkburn with Kate Fitzpatrick Michael Aspin and Donald McDonald Throughout December

**THEATRE ROYAL** (201 6111)  
*The Pen Arts* *The Fair* by Brian Murray director Keith Barbour with Deborah Kerr Andrew McFarlane Patricia Kennedy Gordon Glenwright Diane Smith and Lynette Clavin Until December 15

## DANCE

**THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET** (04566)  
Anne Karamina choreography by Poulasaka music by Tchaikovsky Until December 13

## CONCERTS

**SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE** (2 0588)  
Concert Hall

*An Evening with David Gray* with Bushell Morris Taylor and his Orchestra December 13 and 14

*The autumn concert* Sarah Jung (01 187 1068)

## QLD THEATRE

**ARTS THEATRE** (06 2444)  
*Reveries in the Park* by Neil Simon director Christine Kelly designer Graham McKeown with Kenneth Dechenham Ian Grech and Debbie Whiteman To December 22

Children's Theatre *The Road to Nowhere* 4th 4667 by Boris Becht and David Cox director Simone de Haan To December 22

**BRISBANE ACTORS' COMPANY**  
In review

**HER MAJESTY'S** (221 2777)  
*Twelve by Bernard Shaw* producer director Peter Williams with Robin Lush John Fearn Brenda Sanders Lynne Parsons John Rushman Zoe Bennett To December 15

**I A BOITE** (06 1622)  
*When Jack Robinson in The Death of George Jones* by Simon Brown music Ian Davidson director Susan Mee To December 15

**POPULAR THEATRE TROUPE** (06 1745)  
In review

**QUEENSLAND ARTS COUNCIL**  
Missionary Theatre of Australia The Missionary Program **SCOT THEATRE** Brisbane touring Queensland **QUEENSLAND THEATRE COMPANY** (221 3175)  
In review

## DANCE

**QUEENSLAND BALLET COMPANY** (229 4455)  
Prize Pantomime in Historical Gardens Manarunga by Harold Collins *On the Edge* by Ray Power *Open Space 2* by Harold Collins December 5

## OPERA

**QUEENSLAND OPERA COMPANY**  
In review

*For more music see Spectator on 269 8018*

## SA THEATRE

**ACT** (221 8600)  
*Maniac Theatre* *Don Fox* Music by Bill Age Playwriting director Brian Delaney December 8

**ARTS THEATRE**  
*Along with Clarke and Tandy* Book by Barbara Snelman director Murray George December 18  
**FESTIVAL THEATRE** (31 6121)

*Autumn Season* Christmas 10th December 15

**ICON THEATRE**  
*Sheridan Theatre* *Rebels* by Frank Ford November 21 - December 5  
**LA SEAS** (046 42126)

*Colla Theatre* Hindmarsh *Imagined* by Roger Poole director Brian Kerr November 22 - December 8

**STAGE COMPANY**  
*The Space* (31 6121) *The Death of George Jones* by Steve J Spears director Aime Neme November 22 - December 15  
**STAFF THEATRE COMPANY** (31 31 151 3121)

*Playhouse* *Just Do It* Bushkinovich by Ron Hall director Colin George director Axel Barr To 15 December  
*Christmas Roadshow* *We and We More* director Nick Knight and Kevin Palmer *Senior Citizens and Children* *Home* To December 14

**SACRILEGIOUS WORKSHOP** (272 7034)  
With Young People's Workshop at the Box Factory *Amusement Machine* by Ian Maynard To December 9  
**THEATRE GUILD** (22 3480)

*Little Theatre* *The Singing of St Francis* by Peter Kenny director Jim Yip To December 15

**TROUPE**  
*Red Shed* *What Do I Do When I'm Alone* by the ensemble and *Dance Links* To December 15

## DANCE

**AUSTRALIAN DANCE THEATRE** (212 2084)  
*Balcons Theatre* *Tracing* Choreography Choreography by company members December 7-21

## CONCERTS

### FESTIVAL THEATRE (01 6121)

*Joan Sutherland and Richard Bonington*  
concerts (initial) December 2  
*High Whison the Band* December 4-5  
*The Adelaide Adelaide Symphony*  
Orchestra with Adelaide 4 Royal Society  
concerts, Music Foundation December 7-8  
*Allegro and Marshland* Concerts Dec 14  
*Joe English Christmas Album* Dec 15  
*For more contact John Brien 22 88 00*

## TAS THEATRE

### SALAMANCRA (01 4291)

*Guinea* (Guliver's Return) Kadir director  
Richard Madden. For a general public  
audience, at the Washington Theatre,  
December 16-17 & 18-19 2pm and 8pm  
**TASMANIA PUPPET THEATRE**  
(01 7985)  
Anthony Director, Peter Wilson, music  
John Schultze designer Jennifer  
Davies. Touring East Coast, North East  
Coast and Tasmania  
**THEATRE ROYAL** (01 4266)  
Apprentice Theatre. Professional touring  
performances, and 40 present with 10  
Directors. Evening performances  
December 5-8  
Royal Hobart Hospital Rents December  
12-17 11-15

## DANCE

### THEATRE ROYAL (01 4266)

*Carol Warner Ballet School* December 20  
*For more contact the cultural office on*  
*009 87 4170*

## VIC THEATRE

### WILSONS THEATRE (478 1631)

*Movie in the Lighthouse* (Saturdays)

### ARTS THEATRE (38 9887)

*Companies On, and last touring to*  
*schools* Children's Youth and Women's  
Theatre, classes

### ARCHENHILL OF VICTORIA

(529 4359)  
*Performers by Roger Hall director, Ben*  
*MacKay* Robert Warren-Crossley Theatre  
November 10-December 22

### ANTHROPOLY PERFORMING

**GRIP** (047 7171)  
From Theatre *Pushing In Love* by Jan  
Carnal  
Each Theatre *Science Players* (action and  
Government's Pleasure Theatre Group  
**COMEDY CAFE**  
Wah Road Quamby

### COMEDY THEATRE (047 4647)

*Performers by Roger Hall* See Vic Arts  
Council

### CURTAIN ARTS THEATRE

(078 6742)  
Community based theatre in schools,  
libraries and community centres

### LEAVING THEATRE CAFE (01 7727)

*Movie Performers* (Kathleen Longueville  
and

### HORPIA THEATRE FOUNDATION

(05 4888)  
*Playhouse* *The Long Memory* for  
Arts was devised and directed by Murray  
Cupland. The traditional Christmasy  
professionals, created with Margaret  
Lawrence, Michael Duffield, Harold  
Burgess, Peter Ford and Carole Gammie  
**HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE**  
(047 3211)

Old Vic Company *Master* by  
Shakespeare director John Robinson,  
with Derek Jacobs. To early December  
Rog. Director's new show. Each new  
500

### LANDSLIDE THEATRE

**HINDS DRAMA** (419 6234)  
*The Circus* Continuing  
Performers Alan Parland's *Murder-Cabaret*  
(mark 2)

### LA MANIA (350 4591)

*Christmas Spectacular* by Daniel Kahn  
and *Just In Time* by Dennis O'Brien December  
6-9

### MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY

(094 4000)  
Russell Wilson *Once A Catholic* by Alan  
G. Muller, director Ray Lawler, with  
Annun Davies

*Artemus* Touring North by David  
Williamson. Nymrod production director  
John Hill with Frank Wilson and Carole  
Ray. To December 15

*Artemus* by Frank Haines. To Feb 12  
*Artemus* 2 *Artemus* by Shakespeare  
director John Simpson with John Wilson  
and Bill Hill (092 21 1444)  
Drama Centre of Deakin University

### Regular touring production

### PILGRIM PUPPET THEATRE

(018 8820)  
*Crusoe* *Strong and Strong* director Matt  
Lopez. 10am and 1pm Monday  
**PHOTOGRAPH PUPPETS** (018 1512)  
Multi-cultural puppet theatre, touring  
schools and community centres  
**PRINCE THEATRE** (042 2911)  
*Shen Ji Wu* Company  
**STICK THEATRE COMPANY**  
(24 9967)

*Prince* *Love by Neil Coward*  
**TRILL AND JOHN'S THEATRE**  
**THEATRE RANT** (042 1750)  
With John Newman. Todd Newman  
Marilyn Robert. Vic Gardens  
**MAJOR AMATEUR COMPANIES**  
Rural Theatre Group 762 1082  
Clayton Theatre Group 878 1782  
Hendriks Rep 49 2262  
Melburn Theatre Co 211 0020  
Pumpkin Theatre 42 8237  
Williamstown Little Theatre 528 4267  
1812 Theatre 796 8624

## OPERA

### PAISIA THEATRE (534 6657)

*Australian Opera* *The Merry Wives* by  
Fiona Lebar

*For more contact Les Castagnoli on*  
*79 1777*

## WA THEATRE

### RAYMAN THEATRE (530 1026)

*The Man In The Moon* Christmas  
performance written and directed by Les  
Nichols. November 24 - December 8  
**THEATRE THEATRE** (080 2401)  
*One, Two, Three* *The Children's Year*  
directed by Dale Wofford director  
Edgar Metcalfe Nov 21 - Dec 22

*One Night* *Artemus* *Artemus* by David  
Sullivan director Ray Lawler. To  
December 1

*Artemus* by Frank Haines. To Dec 12  
Artemus 2 *Artemus* by Shakespeare  
director John Simpson with John Wilson  
and Bill Hill (092 21 1444)

*For more contact John Castagnoli on*  
*799 8879*

